NOW

GEORGE WOODCOCK.
The Writer and Politics.

DWIGHT MACDONALD.
The Psychology of Killing.

D. S. SAVAGE.
E. M. Forster and the Dilemma of Liberalism (Part 2).

FREDERIC RAMSEY.
Artist's Life—The Story of Vanicilio Meban.

VICTOR SERGE.
The Revolution at Dead End.

LOUIS ADEANE.
Four Poems.

ALEX COMFORT.
October, 1944.

PETER WELLS.
The Tulip in a Pot.

DENIS PRESTON & ALBERT McCARTHY.
Negro Worksongs.

Reproductions of Drawings by Stanley Jackson.

Reviews by Laurie Hislam, R.G., and Louis Adeane.

Two Shillings

NOW

VOLUME FOUR

CONTENTS

GEORGE WOODCOCK. *The Writer and Politics* 1

DWIGHT MACDONALD. *The Psychology of Killing* 12

D. S. SAVAGE. *E. M. Forster and the Dilemma of Liberalism* (*Part* 2) 21

FREDERIC RAMSEY. *Artist's Life—The Story of Vanicilio Meban* ... 29

VICTOR SERGE. *The Revolution at Dead End* 33

LOUIS ADEANE. *Four Poems for April* 42

ALEX COMFORT. *October*, 1944 44

PETER WELLS. *The Tulip in a Pot* 48

DENIS PRESTON & ALBERT MCCARTHY. *The Poetry of American Negro Folksong. 2. Worksongs* 53

REVIEWS by Laurie Hislam, R.G., and Louis Adeane 59

STANLEY JACKSON. *A Pattern in Frustration.* A series of Four Drawings *opposite page* 32

All manuscripts submitted will be read and considered. We do not, however, accept any responsibility for their safety, and can return them only if they are accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

Published by G. Woodcock, c/o 27 Red Lion Street, London, W.C.1

Distributed by

FREEDOM PRESS, 27 Red Lion Street, London, W.C.1.

George Woodcock

The Writer and Politics

One of the problems which afflicts the writer most persistently in our present society is his relationship to the structure of that society, and, in particular, his relationship to movements which aim at changing such a social structure in order to eliminate some of the evils which it inflicts on humanity. To put the problem in another way, most writers are deeply concerned with politics, and are equally aware of the difficulty of reconciling political methods and actions with the values which govern, or should govern, their approach towards their vocation of writing. Even the writer who pretends to eschew political thinking and to devote himself to his art exclusively, is motivated in his actions by the importance which politics holds in the world where he works. The conscious avoidance of becoming implicated in politics shows that in such a writer's mind politics has a place, even if an unpleasant one. The ivory tower is as much a symptom of inescapable social problems as the air raid shelter is of the inescapable evils of war.

This century is distinguished from its predecessors not merely in the fact that it is a time of ineluctable social disturbance, affecting the life of literally every individual, but also in the fact that, while the writer cannot avoid developing some kind of social consciousness, either positive or negative, he finds his values as an artist, as an intellectual, so strongly opposed to those of society in general that it is almost impossible for him to engage in politics in any ordinary sense of the term. (By politics in this instance I mean the kind of activities which are carried on by political parties and which are coloured by the methods and ideologies of those parties, whether of the left or the right.)

In the nineteenth century it was still possible for the writer to avoid a strong social conscience, provided he had an easy income and little contact with the working class. But even then it was becoming difficult for a writer who had become socially aware to reconcile political action with the standards and values he wished to observe in the practice of his vocation. William Morris, for instance, could not work on amicable terms for any length of time with the various sections of the embryo labour movement with whom he associated, precisely because his consciousness of values and his social vision were irreconcilable with the political attitudes and tactics of his associates.

This was in contrast with the situation of writers in the eighteenth and even in the early years of the nineteenth century. Dean Swift could act as a political pamphleteer without finding anything inconsistent between his writings on social matters and his literary work. Indeed, it is in Swift's'

polemical writings that we find some of his finest work from a literary point of view. Similarly at the time of the French Revolution it was possible for a litterateur like Godwin to play a leading rôle in social activity by writing a treatise on Political Justice. At the same period Hazlitt could write political commentary and literary essays without realising any deep incompatibility between these two activities. To us who read them to-day the works of Godwin and Hazlitt appear as unified bodies of writing. That is to say, there is no fundamental dichotomy evident in the work or outlook of these men. The values which Hazlitt observed in writing on the politics of his day belonged to the same unity as those in his superb essays in Shakespearean criticism. Between Hazlitt the politician and Hazlitt the literary essayist there appeared no mental hiatus like that which divided the Spender of 'Forward from Liberalism' from the Spender of 'The Still Centre.' For Hazlitt there was never any problem of making a choice between politics and literature, like that which has faced many contemporary writers. He saw the two forms of writing merely as differing expressions of the same attitude towards the world.

In contrast with the career of Hazlitt which, however unhappy, was complicated by no doubt as to what was the right way for him to use his abilities, let us portray briefly the miserable record of contemporary British writers in their attempts at social activity.

Many of our poets and novelists, particularly in the generations that immediately preceded the war, were involved in sincere and serious attempts to use their powers of thought and writing in order to assist the establishment of social justice. They had their embroilments in politics, ran uneasily in the party packs, and endeavoured to sink their individualities in the collective baying of slogans for such futilities as the Popular Front. Very soon, however, they realised their incompatibility with their party associates and left the razor games of politics for those of thicker skins.

Bred in a liberal tradition of honesty and fair play—and one cannot deny the negative virtues of the conscientious liberal—they were astonished and hurt to discover the palpable dishonesty and bad faith of 'left-wing' politics. Imbued with the intellectual's respect for independence of thought and speech, they resented the scarcely hidden forces which tried to keep them to the 'party lines'. Having at least some concern for truth as a social and individual virtue, they regarded with distaste the cynical cult of falsehood and distortion displayed by the party bosses and propagandists. Moreover, their troubles came not from one side only. Attacked by their fellow writers for deserting the detachment which had been regarded for so long as incumbent on the intellectual, they were at the same time attacked by their political associates because they could not bring themselves to adhere unquestioningly to a body of dogma with which they did not wholly agree.

An inevitable disillusionment commenced. The failure of the Popular Front, the betrayal of the Spanish Revolution, the vacillations and dishonesties of the Communist Party, as well as the personal discomfort of their own effort to balance on the fence between individual detachment and collective faith in dogma, led cumulatively to a state of disgust with left-wing politics. A few minor figures, for personal or profitable reasons, relinquished their

literary pretensions and toed the line as party propagandists. These, however, were unimportant, and the Communists became, to all intents and purposes, detached from the intellectual world of Britain.

The revulsion of feeling against the Communists became a revulsion against political parties in general. To the innocent eye of the 1930's the Communists had, indeed, seemed the white hope of the social struggle. They formed the only really vocal group of any size that showed signs of vitality and talked what sounded like a revolutionary language. Furthermore, their opportunities for class betrayal had so far been small in this country, and the true record of their activities in Russia and other countries was yet known to few people, even among writers. The remaining parties had nothing to attract the intelligent, and when the doubts of the intellectuals made them withdraw their adhesion from the Communists, they saw no other political movement that seemed to deserve their attention. Indeed, many of them were too deeply disillusioned to search any further.

Returning to the point of departure, the intellectuals remained, as, indeed, they could hardly avoid remaining in such a society, deeply concerned with the social problem and, since their unfortunate experiences with political organisations, with the relationship of the individual writer to the achievement of social change. In a negative way, their attitude is perhaps less muddled than it was ten years ago. They have repudiated political methods, and have realised once again the need for individual freedom as the basic factor in social organisation. On the other hand, they have done little positive. Incapable of initiating any united actions or of manifesting any strong individual attitude, they have adhered vaguely to minor currents of thought which have little or no contact with the rest of the population and whose lack of a positive purpose makes them valueless as a means to social change or regeneration.

The experiences of English writers in their travels with politicians were, of course, largely shaped by circumstances peculiar to this country. English writers have little experience of revolutionary ideas and methods and show, usually, an undeveloped attitude towards politics. This is the result of a century or more during which a clever governmental system has maintained a political equilibrium unknown elsewhere in Europe. Only recently has the social struggle here gained the significance which it has held in France since 1789 and in the other Continental countries for many decades. That a significantly large section of English writers should realise the complete rottenness of the present social system is something which happened only once before, for a comparatively brief period at the end of the eighteenth century. It is therefore not surprising that the writers of the thirties should have shown the political inexperience which led them as innocents into the hands of the party leaders. This lack of a developed social sense will also help to explain the fact that, after their disillusionment, few of them attempted to discover alternative methods to achieve the social change they still admitted to be necessary.

Nevertheless, their experience was one which, in general, writers of all countries have undergone in their relationship with political movements during recent years.

Mayakovsky and Yessenin, two of the greatest of recent Russian poets,

supported the October Revolution with violent enthusiasm. They threw themselves unreservedly into the struggle and gave the Bolsheviks their complete support. But when the 'revolution' was accomplished, when the party was seated in power, they saw a reality that mocked their vision of a better society. They found themselves in a land where petty bureaucrats harried them eternally and a party line was set as a measure for their poetic inspiration. Their faith was destroyed so completely that they were driven, Yessenin first, Mayakovsky a few months afterwards, to the actual physical self-destruction of suicide.

Elsewhere in Europe and America sincere and intelligent writers were driven, if not to physical suicide, at least to a realisation of the impossibility of their achieving anything by working with the existing political parties. Men like Gide and Silone had to dissociate themselves from the parties and policies they had supported in the past. They found that the sectarian structures of these movements made it impossible for any man to express independent thought while remaining within them. They found also that the parties which pretended to be revolutionary in fact worked in such a way that their efforts could not possibly produce a revolutionary society. They realised the corruption implicit in power politics, and rejected it. But they did not cease to be sincere revolutionaries, or to work for a social change that would bring freedom and justice to mankind. The books which Silone wrote after he left the Italian Communist Party are among the greatest contributions any writer has made to the struggle for freedom.

Politicians and professional 'revolutionaries' have been quick to make use of the secession of writers from party groups in order to discredit them. In party circles we are always told that the intellectuals are corrupted by their bourgeois environment. They are supposed to be interested only in their careers, and to have no real concern for the future of the workers. They are held to be out of touch with reality (only Marxists, of course, can be realistic). They are all reactionary at heart, tainted with individualism and mysticism. They are the kind of people who can be expected to co-operate with 'Fascism'. And, lastly, they are really of no use to the workers or to the revolutionary movement, and their departure is to be regarded with joy. This kind of calumny, combined with the difficulty with which state-educated workers follow the theorisings of many writers, has been very effective in dividing the intelligentsia from those workers who also are desirous of radical social change. The very word 'Intellectual' has become a term by which left-wing politicians try to discredit each other and any common rival. The effect of this policy has been to strengthen the hold of leaders over parties and political groups, because any person who takes an independent stand and refuses to follow the party line can be discredited as an 'intellectual', who is out for his own ends and has nothing in common with the workers. I have seen this method at work in literally every left wing movement, from the Labour Party to the anarchists. The demagogic use of such a line of argument is obvious. It serves effectively to keep the rank and file segregated from any individual writer who may think on original lines, and so it preserves the party dogma—and, incidentally, its dogmatists—from the effects of free criticism.

The facts of the situation, however, seem to be contrary to the arguments

of the politicians. It is the object of this article to show that the reason why writers or intellectuals* cannot co-operate with political groups lies in faults inherent in the nature of party organisations and not in that of writer *per se*.

In making this statement I do not mean that every writer is perfect. Unfortunately there is a minority of whom the current accusations against intellectuals are true. Some writers are blinded by money, or by their bourgeois environments. Some are interested in their careers to the exclusion of any consideration for the welfare of humanity. Some build for themselves private worlds of unreality in which they turn away from the cruelties of the public world. A very few, like Henri de Montherlant and Drieu de la Rochelle, have been led by some psychological perversity to support Fascist or reactionary politicians.

But, in spite of this, the number of writers—as distinct from hack journalists—who have deliberately betrayed the oppressed or acted in a socially reactionary manner is extremely small. Many have chosen to dissociate themselves completely from politics and to write according to their artistic impulses. Many more have become so disheartened with their political experiences that they have given up social activity in despair. But only the meanest sophistry could class such attitudes as betrayals, and those writers who have acted deliberately against the interests of the working class or against a genuine revolutionary ideal are few indeed in comparison with the great legion of men of working class origin who, as party and trade union leaders, have been corrupted by privilege and have oppressed and slaughtered the workers who brought them to power. On the other hand, many writers have sacrificed their careers and their lives to work for social justice, and their danger to tyranny is shown by the number of intellectuals who have been martyred for their criticism of authority.

The really independent writer, by the very exercise of his function, represents a revolutionary force. I do not here refer specifically to the part taken by writers in preparing an indictment of modern society on which the revolutionaries have built their case. This is indeed important if one considers the value of the social criticism of men like Marx, Godwin and Kropotkin, or even of Defoe, Swift and their like. But I consider that the man who is ready to apply to any subject on which he writes a standard of values based on a sincere conception of the truth is bound to act in his writing against injustice and falsehood, even if he does not write for the specific purpose of expediting social change. The novelist who shows the hollowness of middle class life, the poet who displays without comment the spiritual agonies of war, as well as the painter who shows on his canvas a symbol of the schizoid futility of a modern city, are all playing their part in subverting a corrupt society. To display the truth, even a limited aspect of the truth, is to elevate a criterion against which falsehood must be judged and condemned. In this way, any honest artist is an agitator, an anarchist,

*By the terms 'writers' and 'intellectuals' I mean those men who write freely and according to their conception of the truth. I do not mean the hack journalists who willingly submit their work to the dictates of authority or money. Nor do I mean those pseudo-intellectuals who are concerned with self-advancement or personal fame, and whose mimicry and charlatanry help to discredit all intellectuals in the eyes of ordinary people.

an incendiary. By expressing an independent standard of values he attacks the principle of authority, by portraying the truth according to his own vision he attacks the factual manifestations of authority. This is why governments try to discourage the independent artist who refuses to become a hack, writing or composing or painting according to safe conventions in the interests of banal propaganda. In Russia the imposition of 'Social Realism', in Germany the campaign against 'Degenerate Art,' were really attacks on the independent artist because the truths he told were subsersive to authority. In such societies the writer or painter who in some way manages to express himself fearlessly becomes as much an agent of revolution as the most devoted revolutionary militant.

And here, I think, lies the real reason for the difficulty which most writers experience in associating themselves with political movements. The conscientious writer, the sincere artist, the true intellectual, are all capable of acting in a revolutionary manner so long as they are allowed to think and speak without compulsion or restriction. This applies as much to their specifically social writing or painting as it does to the anarchic and subversive elements in such of their work as might be termed 'pure art' or 'detached thought.' As long as they work according to an internally valid creed, their work will have real significance and will contribute spontaneously to the destruction of falsehood. When however they are subordinated or themselves attempt to subordinate their work to an external system, they become afflicted with the schizoid frustration which we have noticed as characteristic of the attitude of the modern intellectual when confronted by social issues. The unity which should characterise a writer's work is replaced by a duality comprised of, on one side, the values which he has realised are valid within himself, and, on the other, the values of an external code to which he is attempting to mould his work. Insofar as he subordinates the internal to the external values, his work loses significance. Instead of being subversive, he becomes subservient, an intellectual slave instead of a liberator of the mind.

If we return to our historical survey, we shall see this the more clearly. It was with the rise of disciplined revolutionary parties at the time of the French Revolution that the split between the intellectual and political groups became evident. The Jacobins aimed at an authoritarian state under a party dictatorship imposing uniformity of opinion, and their political associations tended to take on the same authoritarian and dogmatic character.

Previously, the structure of political parties and groups had been sufficiently lax to admit a wide freedom of opinion. Doctor Johnson could claim to be a Tory and at the same time attack both patriotism and slavery. But the Jacobin societies tended increasingly towards set codes of opinion from which a departure became heretical. Godwin, realising this trend, kept aloof from the more highly organised political groups. He worked for social change as an individual co-operating with other individuals. In *Political Justice* he makes a clear statement of his objections to political associations, as distinct from small free groups of individuals.

> "If once the unambitious and candid circles of enquiring men be swallowed up in the insatiate gulf of noisy assemblies, the opportunity of improvement is instantly annihilated. The happy varieties of sentiment which so eminently contribute to intellectual acuteness are lost. Activity of thought is shackled by the fear

that our associates should disclaim us. A fallacious uniformity of opinion is produced which no man espouses from conviction, but which carries all men along with a resistless tide. Clubs, in the old English sense—that is, the periodical meetings of small and independent circles—may be admitted to fall within the line of these principles. But they cease to be admissable when united with the tremendous articles of confederacy and committees of correspondence. Human beings should meet together not to enforce, but to enquire. Truth disclaims the alliance of marshalled numbers."

Godwin admitted that it might be necessary to associate in numbers at times of emergency and for the attainment of specific purposes. On critical occasions he himself willingly co-operated with other radicals, as when he played a leading part in thwarting the government during the State Trials of the members of the London Corresponding Society. But he held that such alliances should be temporary and should not be allowed to harden into associations with permanent codes determining the ideological beliefs which each of their members should hold.

Godwin's premonitions were well founded. The members of the political societies, who borrowed ideas from Godwin when it suited them, abused him for his condemnation of permanent associations, and during the political development of the nineteenth century their ideas gained the ascendancy, with results fatal to the social welfare of Europe.

It was with the rise of the Blanquist conspiratorial societies and, later, the organised Marxist parties, that political activity assumed the character it maintains to-day. These parties aimed at becoming highly disciplined groups which would attain control of society either by forceful *coup d'état* or by sheer weight of numbers in electoral campaigns. In order to achieve this they deemed it necessary to have not only an agreed common objective, but also a uniform means of attaining it. The members of the party were expected to think, believe and act alike. The founders and leaders imposed their ideas on the followers, and later these ideas crystallised into dogmatic systems which bound the thought of party adherents. These political systems of thought became all-pervasive, so that if a man joined a party he was expected automatically to believe the same as his fellows on a vast number of points. At best, every individual had to mould his ideas to those of the majority. At worst, he had to accept the *ukase* of some central committee, which in its turn might be dominated by an individual politician whose ideas it voted into party decrees.

The effects of such conditions on the integrity of political life and of the individuals involved therein were disastrous. A man who deliberately accepts the intellectual domination of another soon loses any real sense of the truth. So does the man who imposes on others his own ideas. Falsehood in social life, cynically administered by the political leaders and blindly accepted by their dupes, was the inevitable result of such a situation.

The technique of propaganda adopted by the new parties and the need to reach some lowest common denominator by which their ideas could be administered to a great number of the population led to a further weakening of the truth by the presentation of a world of black and white generalisations, and by the replacement of fact and reasoned argument by the myth, the slogan and the symbol. Political parties, like churches, began to play mostly on the emotions, to use symbols in order to induce people to accept their political dogmas in the same way as the churches used symbols to bring

about the adoption of their theological dogmas. The use of symbol and myth by left-wing political groups is a subject which is worth a detailed study, but this would lead too far from the main trend of argument for me to pursue it at present. It is sufficient to say that the attempt to attain uniformity of thought, and the methods of propaganda used by politicians, have led to an acceptance of generalisations which tolerates falsehood and an intellectual sectarianism intolerant to any form of thought which does not fit into the rigid pattern of dogmatic orthodoxy.

To this tendency towards falsehood we must add the corruption of moral attitude which results from the hierarchical constitution of most political groups. Such a form of organisation gives opportunities of power, internally when the party is out of place, externally if it governs. This power, and the privileges attendant on it, make it impossible for even the most sincere of political leaders to remain completely honest in his actions. When in opposition to the government he is concerned not so much with the statement of the truth as with the tactics of gaining power. To this end all his actions become subordinate. The welfare of humanity, to which he pays lip service, is shelved until the struggle for power is ended. His own authority within the party is justified on the ground that only by keeping its disciplined structure can the party hope to gain the position where its ideals of helping humanity can be fulfilled. When, however, the leader has gained power, his ideals are never realised. Power and privilege are pleasant and readily corrupting to those who have sought them for long. Moreover, he who holds them is subject to rivalry and, by force or fraud, must fight to retain his position. He struggles to keep power, and in struggling, increases his own preoccupation with it. It becomes the major end. The excuse for his actions is always that he must preserve from attack the ideals and the freedom for which he fought. But in reality these are never achieved, while tyranny and falsehood grow up in their name.

This is a rake's progress followed by all political leaders. Their success in gaining and keeping power depend not on their honesty of purpose, but on their faculties of fraud and cruelty. In politics the keenest liar and the most ruthless fighter will always defeat the man whose actions are inspired by any such values as truth, justice or freedom. Consequently, political movements inevitably become dominated by men whose actions are governed rather by expediency than by principles. A leader is chosen for his ability to conduct political manœuvres, not for his moral rectitude, and in the discussions of parties tactics is always more esteemed than morality.

Thus the values on which a free and harmonious society can be built, and with which the true intellectual is concerned and governed, are not in general to be found in political groups. The desire to impose uniformity within the group tends to destroy honest and detached judgment. The needs of propaganda encourage an acceptance of something less than the exact truth, which soon approximates to a tolerance of falsehood. The tactical necessities of the struggle for power and the hierarchical internal structure of parties tend towards a disregard of the necessary moralities of human intercourse, towards political fraud and the intolerance and suppression of opposition. All parties are liable to these disorders of falsehood and power-seeking. They are the inevitable consequences of

structure and methods, and no body that aims at a wide measure of internal uniformity is free from them. Even anarchist groups, when they have become highly organised movements concerned mainly with the tactics of struggle and the propaganda of generalisations, symbols and slogans, have suffered in some degree from these faults and have become proportionately less valuable as agents of the anarchism they desire.

Some years of concern with the problem of attaining social justice, and of practical work towards that end in conjunction with political and revolutionary groups, have led me reluctantly to accept Godwin's ideas concerning parties and associations. The only kind of group that is not liable to become corrupt or to demand of its members at least some relinquishment of private judgment is the small, loosely connected group of individuals whose object is the ascertainment and publication of social truths. And, indeed, this is the only kind of group that is really necessary for the attainment of freedom. Fundamentally, the problem of the social revolution is the problem of education. When the people have learnt the need of freedom, they will act and struggle in spontaneous co-operation without permanent political organisations to lead them. But, on the other hand, they will not learn the need for freedom merely from social teachings.

Here we reach a further limitation of the politician's outlook. Generally, the most sincere social propagandist sees only a very limited facet of truth, the truth as it applies to men living in society. For this reason, he seeks to find social and external causes and remedies for every evil. But the universe and man also have many more aspects than those which confront the sociologist. Man is a social being only by default. His most important qualities are individual, and society becomes alive only insofar as it contains living individuals. The anarchists have rightly stressed in their teachings, if not always in their practice, the supreme value of the individual above society. The corollary of this belief is that man is governed by laws which are not completely social. Or rather, perhaps, that the laws and values which govern society must be transmitted through the individual man and must be part of the system of values which that man realises from within himself and not from external society. This attitude does not presuppose the existence of a personal God, but it does assume the existence of some unity of natural law throughout the universe, which is made manifest internally in man just as it is made manifest externally in the harmony of nature. The object of this essay is not to study the philosophical implications of such a view. It is merely to point out that society will not be made harmonious by social developments alone, but only insofar as men attain harmony within themselves.

The social problem is fundamentally an individual problem for each man to solve personally. Society will be free only when each individual knows the meaning of freedom, harmonious only when each individual realises his own harmony, integrated only when each individual has become integrated within himself. Anarchism is only secondarily a social teaching. Its primary object is the realisation by the individual of his own nature. And for this reason it may well be that those who are concerned with the study of man as an individual and who wish to make articulate the values that arise from within men, are contributing as much towards eventual anarchy

as those whose concern is primarily with man as a social being. For instance, it is probable that a psychologist like Jung or Erich Fromm may, by making freedom an internal reality, give at least as much to the future harmony of mankind as the social theorist who aims at making freedom an external reality.

From this point of view, we should treat with less impatience those who claim that social peace will come only from a 'change of heart' within men. But this does not mean that social development should be disregarded. Indeed, the duality of individual and society is largely unreal, as is any other fragmentation of the wholeness of life. Perhaps the most effective approach to the problem of man's future is one that recognises both the internal values which must govern men's actions and the external world where those actions can be enacted without disturbance of social harmony. But it is obvious that such a comprehensive view cannot be gained within the confines of a dogma-ridden political movement.

Most of the valuable social thinking has always been done outside the limits of social organisations, by individual writers and philosophers. These men were able to do this precisely because they could view society in a detached manner, and apply to it, not the criteria which had been forced upon them through external creeds, but the standards which they had tested by their own thought. The example of these writers, such men as Tolstoy, Godwin, Kropotkin, John Stuart Mill, Gerrard Winstanley, shows that the individual writer can play a more important part in social evolution than the politician or the politician's dupe. The very nature of political groups, as we have seen, makes it impossible for the writer to remain within them and keep his integrity. Either he must secede and do what he can individually. Or he must stay and degenerate into the inanity and corruption of a party hack writer.

Nevertheless, the writer who is forced to end his connection with organised political activity need not become socially useless. Indeed, as we have already shown, as an individual he can do more towards the achievement of a true revolution in the basic nature of society. This fairly obvious fact has been ignored by many people because in our age social activity has become so much the usurped province of the political party. It was so little realised, for instance, by the English writers of the 1930's, that once they ceased to associate with political groups they abandoned their duty to speak as socially articulate persons. They certainly failed to realise that every word they spoke as individuals would be worth ten they had spoken as party members or followers. The limit they have reached in their effort to re-establish the writer's duty to proclaim values is marked by Spender in an essay on 'The Creative Arts of Our Time.'

> "In a world of transition in which the values and standards of the past are giving way to new standards, even the meanings of words become lost in the uses of self-interested advertisers and rulers who have no object except to put their own interests in the most flattering light. If words expressing ideas have been used often enough to express debased or even quite contradictory meanings, finally the word loses all meaning, and the idea itself is in danger of becoming lost or treated as meaningless. The task of the poet is to organize words in such a way that their meaning is clear and unmistakeable. This is betrayed if the poet takes over the propaganda of political parties and uses words in false contexts. For if the

meanings are allowed to become lost, the living values become lost or unrelated to the past contexts in which they have expressed something real."

This is excellent, so far as it goes. The preservation of the truth of words and ideas we have already shown to be necessary for any movement of thought that would affect decisively the social and moral development of humanity. To dissociate from and expose falsehood in writing and thought is an obvious duty of the sincere writer. Indeed, it is the only duty which he can be said to incur. And so long as he defends the truth, in no matter how limited a field, he is helping to undermine the fabric of falsehood and injustice. Hazlitt boasted that he 'never wrote a line that licked the dust.' Had he done nothing more than that, had he never written with positive social purpose, still his fearless expression of the truth wherever he found it would have been a defiance of authority and would have served a revolutionary purpose.

Nevertheless, while the duty of the writer is perhaps limited to adherence to sincerity and truth in whatever he writes, he has the ability, if he desires, to do far more. For it is the writer who can express most capably those internal values which we have already seen to be the basis of social as well as of individual life. It is the writer who can examine the inner heart of man and express the natural laws that govern his life, the universal harmonies upon which freedom and justice can be built. His work need not be philosophical. He can write on the most humble function or relationship in life and yet write with validity, if he observes sincerely his own values. Nor need he necessarily write fine literature or pitch his thought in a high register. If he feels a need to abandon his former standards of literary writing, as Tolstoy did, in order to write humbly and simply to be intelligible for uneducated men and women, then he is quite justified in following such an impulse. What is not justified is to write obediently, according to some external creed or compulsion, as writers do who act to the dictates of political parties.

To-day we are perhaps too sadly aware of the nature of politics to wish to claim, like Shelley, the doubtful honour of being the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world'. The task of the writer is not to make laws, or to elaborate dogmas. It is the humble task of realising and portraying the truth. It is a task of revelation, and true revelation is no more than making men aware of the natural and harmonious laws that already exist within them.

This function does not mean that the writer steps aside from the crude realities of life. On the contrary, it is these very crude realities which he must elucidate and give meaning. Nor does it in any way confer on him a mantle of 'chosen' or 'elect'. The writer is a man who has been given, perhaps by chance of birth or circumstance, a happy gift of expression by which he can communicate to his fellows what wisdom he has gained. But just as, according to Coomaraswamy, each man is an artist, so each man, potentially at least, is capable of wisdom. The writer can give nothing—he can only awaken what has been given already.

Dwight Macdonald

The Psychology of Killing

One of the things which make it possible for a modern civilian to participate in war without more psychological resistance than he has is the fact that the murderous aspect of war is depersonalized. Most of the killing is done at such long range that the killers have no sense of the physical effects of their attack. It is true that they themselves are often on the receiving end of such attacks, and might be expected to realize what happens to the enemy by analogy with their own experiences, but the ordinary man, perhaps mercifully, is not especially imaginative that way. And anyway, it is one thing to know that one may be responsible for the death and mutilation of invisible people ten miles away or five miles down, and another to cut a man's throat with one's own hands.

Thinking along these lines, one finds three levels of warfare.

Level No. 1: aerial and artillery bombardment, whether of troops or cities; robot bombs, where the principle of indiscriminate blind destruction becomes dramatically clear, although actually robot bombing is no more indiscriminate than the saturation bombing with which the British night raiders obliterate German cities; mines and booby traps, where time as well as space draws a curtain between killer and victim; naval warfare, in which the opposing fleets often cannot see each other. On both the giving and the receiving end, all these types of warfare seem to be as impersonal as a thunderstorm. This kind of killing by remote control makes up the great bulk of modern warfare.*

*"The majority of casualties are now inflicted by artillery fire," writes Col. Lanza, "and may amount to 80% or more of the total." (See his comment on Napoleon's "Maxims" in "Napoleon and Modern War," Military Service Publishing Co., $1.)

A recent dispatch from France gives an idea of the terrible impersonality of this kind of fighting:

"My vantage point was an observation post for saturation artillery that had been pounding Jerry all night and the previous day. The valley stretched away to both flanks like a huge football stadium. An area of about 20 square miles was visible . . . Spasmodically, like torches, flares would burst on the horizon as the shells found targets.

"At intervals of 20 or 30 minutes, the observation spotters would halt the fire from batteries located four or five miles to the rear. Then in the distance, out from the small forests and hedgerows, would appear a minute figure with a white flag. He would be followed by other small figures almost indistinguishable through the glasses. Another white flag would pop up from the green and soon the column of figures would grow large—20, 30, maybe 60 or 70 marching men carrying 10 to 12 white squares of cloth. They would make the long trek to the American lines with upraised hands.

"When the catch was bagged, the merciless pounding would commence anew. The prisoners protested: 'It's nothing but butchery.'"

—*N.Y. World-Telegram*, August 23, 1944.

Level No. 2 is combat in which soldiers fight against individual and visible antagonists, but separated by distance, which they bridge by firearms. Aerial dogfights, sniping, rifle combat come under this head.* As in No. 1, the killing is done mechanically at long distance, without physical contact. The psychological effects probably resemble those of hunting, which is what it is, with the roles of hunter and hunted being constantly reversed.

On Level No. 3, one kills or cripples another human being by one's own personal efforts, in close physical contact, aided only by a knife, string, club or other simple tool. Here the essence of war cannot be concealed, and comes out nakedly in a way shocking to the normal Western individual. To perform successfully this kind of killing requires a brutalization far beyond that called for by No. 1 and No. 2. Thus the psychological and the statistical aspects of modern war move in opposite directions: the more powerful the weapons the greater the slaughter and the less the killer's consciousness of it. Even within level No. 3 itself, the rule holds: if one has no tool at all but just bare hands, the business of killing reaches its peak of horror so far as the killer is concerned.

The above generalizations were suggested by a little book titled *Kill—or Get Killed; a Manual of Hand-to-Hand Fighting*, by Major Rex Applegate (Military Service Publishing Co., Harrisburg, Pa.; $2). This is a quasi-official manual, for the use of officers in training troops. After reading it, I'm not sure I should not, if pressed, choose the second alternative; there are limits even to self-preservation. The field is covered systematically, with chapters on such topics as "Strangulations" (by stick—"very efficient"; and by cord—"the thinner the diameter, the more instant the effectiveness") and "The Fighting Knife", with a discussion of the more efficient types—"efficient" is a favourite term of the author—and of the relative advantages various parts of the body offer for cutting, stabbing, hacking and ripping.

But much the stiffest chapter, in line with the rule noted above, is the one with the mild title, "Unarmed Offense." Here we learn the most "efficient" methods of eye-gouging ("best accomplished by placing a thumb on the inside of the eye socket next to the nose and flicking the eyeball out towards the edge of the cheek"), lip-tearing ("hook your thumb in the corner of the mouth and tear towards the hinge of the jaw"), sitting-neck-break (best undescribed), ear concussion blow ("approaching your opponent from the rear, you can rupture his eardrums by cupping both hands and simultaneously striking them against his ears"), kicks-to-kill ("After your opponent has been downed, the kill can be made with a kick . . . It is best to be wearing heavy boots."), and, above all, the proper exploitation of the testicles. The author becomes positively lyrical about these "most vulnerable and sensitive parts of a man's body . . . Any strong foot or hand blow delivered in the crotch will enable the weakest man to knock the strongest senseless or to disable him to the point where he is easily finished off by

*Although the popular idea of warfare is still soldiers shooting at each other with rifles, fighting at Level No. 2 is to-day unimportant, at least from the standpoint of bloodshed. "In 1918," writes Col. Lanza, "only 11% of the casualties occurred from infantry fire; and in 1942 Russian statistics indicated that only 10% were due to this cause . . . Some infantry soldiers in 1918 belonging to regiments which suffered heavy casualties in the six weeks' campaign in the Argonne, never fired their rifles, for they never saw any enemy to fire at."

some other means. The strongest holds can be broken at any time by grasping an opponent's testicles and pulling and twisting them."

There is an anatomy of mayhem as well as of healing.

Major Applegate's general rule is simple enough: study the Marquess of Queensberry rules carefully, and then do the opposite. Hit below the belt and always kick a man when he is down (with "heavy boots," if possible). "Ruthlessness is what we seek to achieve. It is best defined in two words: speed and brutality . . . Forget the rules and use the so-called 'foul' methods." The author recognizes that draftees from civilian life usually have strong prejudices against this sort of thing, prejudices which must be overcome by careful psychological conditioning. "The average American doughboy when shown a fighting knife for the first time, will have an aversion to its use as a killing implement. This same feeling is apparent in preliminary stages of bayonet training." The situation is by no means hopeless, however. Proper training methods can recondition the soldier until "the killing instinct becomes aroused to the point where he has confidence in the weapon and is not averse to using it."

The chapter describing one of these methods—the operation of a "practical indoor course" for hand-to-hand fighting—reads like the account of a Pavlovian experiment in conditioned reflexes, combined with elements of a parlour game and an Eden Musée. The course is laid out in a basement and consists of a series of rooms, pits, tunnels, and corridors in which dummies and targets, in enemy uniforms, are arranged to appear and disappear, to the accompaniment of various coloured lights and sound effects, as the "student", armed to the teeth, makes his way over the course. Sample directions:

"When the student and coach reach the foot of the stairs, target No. 1, which is a bobbing target concealed behind a pillar illuminated by a red light, is exposed. After firing at this, the man and coach continue around target No. 1 . . . Target No. 4 is next encountered and is concealed behind a curtain. This is also illuminated by red light and when the curtain is pulled exposing it, the target, which is equipped with a blank pistol, fires at the student. . . . Before entering the tunnel, the coach exposes dummy A and the student uses the knife on it. While the student is proceeding from target No. 1 to target No. 4, the 'Gestapo Torture Scene' or the 'Italian Cursing' sequence is played over the loudspeaker . . . Target No. 9 is in darkness, and as the student enters this compartment, the 'Jap Rape' sequence is used. [This is described as "Jap talking to an American girl followed by her screams and his sinister laugh."] While the coach is reloading the student's pistol, the 'Get that American son-of-a-bitch' sequence is used. As the coach and student pass through the curtain into the next compartment, they are confronted by a dummy which has a knife stuck in its back, and represents a dead body. This dummy is illuminated by a green light and is not to be fired at by the student, although practically all of them do."

Thus by a combination of shock, fright and induced rage the subject's civilized inhibitions are broken down and he is conditioned to stab and shoot by reflex action. "There is no limit to the possibilities of this range," writes the author proudly. "The only limitation is the ingenuity of the builder." This is an exaggeration: the British used similar courses in

training their commandoes several years ago, with additional improvements such as booby traps, collapsible stairs and showers of animal blood, but they had to be toned down, apparently because the effect on the students was too severe. Perhaps by World War III, mankind will have progressed far enough to permit the use of these more realistic devices. By World War IV, it may be possible to substitute live prisoners for the dummies.

There is one rather interesting problem in operating the course. Although the writer never states so directly, it would seem there is danger that the student's inhibitions will be broken down so thoroughly that he will shoot or stab the coach who accompanies him. ("Your guide and confessor," as the instruction-sheet issued to the students terms him—a kind of Virgil leading his charge through a sordid Inferno.) The coach is advised to keep himself in a position to grab the student's gun arm "at any instant"; after the three dummies along the course have been stabbed, "the knife is taken away from student to prevent accident"; and finally: "There is no place on course where total darkness prevails while instructor is near student." In truth, there are no limits to the possibilities . . .

The author gets into an ironical conflict between ideology and practicality when he has to admit that the Japanese soldier is in many ways the ideal hand-to-hand fighter. As a patriot, he is inclined to see this as one more proof of Japanese barbarism, but as a technician, he views it in quite a different light. The whole chapter on "unarmed offense" takes off from the Japanese technique of jiu-jitsu. The Japanese soldier is perhaps the world's most skilful bayonet fighter; he spends almost half his training time at bayonet practice, and practice of a more effective kind than the American soldier usually gets: "Japanese bayonet training is most interesting because the personal element is injected into everything the Japanese soldier does. Three fourths of the bayonet drill is given over to personal combat between men." As for using the knife, the Japanese soldier generally has his own personal fighting knife, which is handed down from father to son and "revered with all traditional Japanese rites." Finally, to crown his virtues, "The Jap is extremely testicle conscious." The inhibitions about physical cruelty which have been built up in the Western psyche through centuries of Christian morality and bourgeois humanitarianism are one of the real points of superiority of Western over Eastern culture. (Need it be said that there are equally real points of inferiority?) From the military viewpoint, however, and this is the viewpoint that has come to dominance in our age, this is an element of Japanese superiority, whatever the ideologues say about "Jap barbarism."

But this is making a good deal out of a little book on what is, by my own account, a very limited aspect of modern warfare? Listen, then, to the late General McNair, who was until lately in charge of the training of all American troops. Speaking on November 11, 1942, over a nation-wide hook-up, General McNair outlined his philosophy:

"Our soldiers must have the fighting spirit. If you call that hating our enemies, then we must hate with every fibre of our being. We must lust for battle; our object in life must be to kill; we must scheme and plan night and day to kill. There need be no pangs of conscience, for our enemies have lighted the way to faster, surer and crueller killing; they are

past masters. We must hurry to catch up with them if we are to survive."

Such sentiments are not to be regarded as indicating any personal bloodthirstiness in General McNair, any more than Major Applegate's competent discussion of the best method of gouging out an eye necessarily convicts him of any lack of humane feeling. Quite the contrary, indeed. The more decent human beings one assumes the General and the Major are, the more strongly the point comes out that war is murder on a big scale, and if one's war aims are simply to defeat the enemy, as is the case on both sides in this war, then it is unreasonable (or hypocritical) to boggle over moral issues. There is still a certain apologetic note in statements like General McNair's: our enemies started it; we have to adopt such methods in self defence; once the enemy is crushed, we can go back to decency. A decade or two of armed "peace", however, with new enemies materializing, new wars taking shape—already Roosevelt has said we can "never" relax our vigilance against future Japanese attacks—will change all this, and we shall come to accept war and its logical consequences with the same ease with which we now accept the carnage wrought daily in the Chicago stockyards.

The Army Air Force Medical Corps has developed a new technique for psychiatric treatment called "narcosynthesis," in which the patient is thrown into a "synthetic dream state" by the use of drugs. He then talks freely about the anxieties he represses in a conscious state. (The Freudian theory, by the way, that neuroses are the result of repression has been remarkably confirmed by psychiatric experience during this war. The chief technique in treating battle neuroses is getting the victim to talk about his experience—and to realize that every soldier is horribly afraid in battle, so that there is no reason to suppress the expression of fear.)

"One of the most amazing revelations derived by our uncovering technique," states a paper read before the American Psychiatric Association on May 16 last by Lt. Col. R. R. Grinker and Major J. P. Spiegel, "has been the universality of guilt reactions, not only in men who have been removed from combat because of anxiety states but also in those who have successfully and honourably completed their tour of duty." It is immensely significant that these guilt-feelings are apparently connected not, as the civilian would expect, with the slaughter of enemy soldiers and civilians, but rather with the soldier's own comrades. The report continues:

"These guilt reactions are related to the most varied, irrational and illogical experiences. A comrade was killed during a mission which he took instead of the patient . . . We hear often the guilty cry, 'I should have got it instead of him.' . . . At first, the soldier's love is for his country, but soon he comes to love his outfit, his commanding officer and his friends. . . . He transforms a considerable share of his personal self-love to affection and pride in his outfit by the process of identification, and thus is enabled to overcome many obstacles to the performance of his military duties.

"Another source of guilt feeling begins as the flyer approaches the end of his duty. He becomes intensively anxious on his last, or next to last, mission, feeling that he will never reach his goal. This is the initial displaced manifestation of guilt over the anticipated desertion of his squadron. . . . [After leaving the squadron on completion of a tour of duty] many become chronic alcoholics, others develop gastro-intestinal pain

and vomiting. Some cannot bear to eat, thinking of how the boys back in the squadron are living, and punish themselves by refusing all oral gratifications. They feel as if the real self, the essential person were still overseas. In this concept they are correct, because they have suddenly subtracted their individual ego-spans from the group and left behind the greater part of their combat personalities. But unfortunately, they have not been able to so easily slough off the group super-ego which now punishes them for their soft and easy life. . . ."

Thus to the process of conditioning described above in considering Major Applegate's treatise, we may add another psychological explanation of how men can endure modern warfare: the identification of the individual soldier with his "outfit" and the loyalty, pride, self-sacrifice, co-operation, and comradeship which this identification brings into play. In some wars, the soldier identifies himself with a great principle: the Rights of Man, revolutionary socialism, the liberation or defence of a nation. These great impersonal political convictions aroused the common soldiers of the French Revolutionary armies and of Trotsky's Red Army to a pitch of fanaticism which swept all before it. In this war, as we shall see below, the complete absence of any such emotion in the ranks of the American armies is the first thing that impresses most observers. Simple group loyalty thus becomes the most important factor in morale. "I've been around war long enough to know that nine-tenths of morale is pride in your outfit and confidence in your leaders and fellow-fighters," writes Ernie Pyle. A *Time* correspondent is even more explicit: "I think men fight for two reasons: (1) ideals; (2) *esprit de corps*. Since we in the United States have done such an abominable job of educating a generation, few of our men fight for things they believe in—they don't know what to believe in. The Marine Corps, which must be the finest organization of fighting men the world has ever seen, does not know what to believe in either—except the Marine Corps. The marines fight solely on *esprit de corps*." (Robert Sherrod in *Time*, Dec. 27, 1943.) The reason there are not more nervous breakdowns among bomber crews, who are "living beyond their psychological means" much of the time, is partly *esprit de corps* and partly "the strong common love of the plane itself." (Lt.-Col. J. W. Murray, of the Air Surgeon's Office, quoted in *PM*, May 15, 1944.) The airman's fatherland is his plane.

There are thus important psychological offsets to the boredom, horror and futility which war means to those forced to engage in it. Lt-Col. Murray, noting that it is impossible to tell in advance what type of soldier will crack under strain, adds that some draftees who in their civilian life had suffered severe neurotic symptoms get along very well in a military environment. "Army life and combat seems to fulfil important emotional needs and thereby to stabilize these individuals." One of the psychological advantages of army life over the competitive dog-eat-dog environment of capitalist society must be the sense of comradeship and of co-operative effort. Just as war releases the productive energy of industry from the bonds of property and profit, so it also allows expression to some very fine traits of human nature which have little outlet in peacetime society. An army psychiatrist who went along as an observer on a bombing mission, for example, gives a really inspiring picture of men working together:

"During the violent combat and in the acute emergencies that arose

during it, the crew were all quietly precise on the interphone and decisive in action. The tail gunner, right waist gunner and navigator were severely wounded early in the fight, but all three kept at their duties efficiently and without cessation until the combat was over. . . . The burden of emergency work with the controls, oxygen, wounded men and reparable battle damage fell on the pilot, engineer, and ball turret gunner, and all functioned with rapidity, effectiveness and no lost motion. . . . The decisions, arrived at with care and speed, were unquestioned once they were made, and proved excellent. In the period when disaster was momentarily expected, the alternative plans of action were made clearly and with no thought other than for the safety of the entire crew. All at this point were quiet, unobtrusively cheerful and ready for anything. There was at no time paralysis, unclear thinking, faulty or confused judgment, or self-seeking in any of them."

The object of all this co-operation, skill, and unselfish, even heroic, behaviour was to blow to pieces other human beings and their homes, in a war whose purposes the bomber crew—if it was typical—didn't believe in and indeed took little interest in. The domination of modern man by his own creations, his involvement in processes beyond his control and contrary to his desires, the contrast in our society between noble means and ignoble ends, and the dissolution of ends into means, so that the Marines fight for the honour of the Marines—all of this is summed up here.

It would be a cheerless outlook if this were all that can be said about the psychological reactions of men to modern warfare. Fortunately, however, these positive factors which make possible adjustment to war do not as yet seem to be dominant, at least not in the American armies. I have emphasized them because one tends to overlook them and therefore to expect more resistance to the process of war from soldiers than actually takes place. But the big fact is still that among American troops psychological disorders are running at a higher rate than in the last war. Although the Army screens out at the induction centres as many potential psychiatric cases as possible—one out of every ten draftees is rejected for psychiatric reasons—the incidence of neuropsychiatric disorders in the army is *twenty times that in civilian life,* and within the army itself it is *ten times greater in combat areas than in non-combat areas.* A Presidential medical board which examined causes of army rejections last winter was "astonished" and "concerned" at the number of "N.P." (neuropsychiatric) discharges from the Army, "particularly those occurring in the first six months of service." (*Time,* March 13, 1944.) What worried the Presidential board seems to me, on the contrary, cheering news. I should be concerned if the N.P. rate *failed* to increase sharply within the armed forces. Is it unreasonable to speculate that, blocked from political expression, outraged human nature seeks out this back door, so to speak, of protest?

It is good news, also, that the rate of N.P. rejections is running high. On July 10 last, General Hershey told a Senate committee: Out of 4 million disqualified, over 1 million draftees were rejected because they were found mentally unfit, and though three-quarters of that number at first sight seemed to be sound, they showed on examination that their emotions were in such a state that they could not stand modern war." This seems to me a pretty good state to have one's emotions in. No doubt most of

the million draftees rejected as mentally "unfit" were neuropsychiatric cases by any standards, but may we not assume that a good proportion of them were simply too sane to fit into the lunatic pattern of total war?

There is meaning, also, in the contrast between the N.P. rates in this war against the last. According to the *U.S. News* of January 14, 1944, 35% of all rejections by the army in this war's draft have been N.P., as against only 3% in the last war. Furthermore, 50 men per thousand develop N.P. disorders in training camps, and a higher percentage overseas; as against 30 per thousand in World War I training camps and only 20 per thousand in the A.E.F. Part of the increase is probably due to advances in psychiatry since the last war, which have resulted in more accurate diagnosis and in more attention being paid to mental disease. But it seems safe to assume that some of the increase comes from: (1) the increasing incidence of mental disease in the United States since 1917—an index, by the way, of the inhuman quality of our present society; and (2) the general lack of enthusiasm for this war and its aims, as against the naive patriotism and idealism which was widespread in 1917.

This last is an especially interesting point. One would expect the degree to which the soldier believes in the war he is fighting to be an important factor in his morale (which is an old-fashioned term for his neuropsychological health). Ardent political convictions can enable the individual to survive experiences he might otherwise crack under. I have seen no studies of this rather delicate question. There is, however, a suggestive passage in the report which Col. Leonard G. Rowntree, chief of the medical division of the selective service system, gave before the American Psychiatric Association on May 14 last. Noting an increase in psychiatric rejections by the army examiners between December, 1942, and December, 1943, Dr. Rowntree added: "The most striking evidence is the marked increase in incidence of psychosomatic disease in the Negro, *who in peacetime appeared relatively immune.*" (My emphasis) Rejections of Negroes for peptic ulcer, for example, have been running at 2½ times the peacetime rate, while neurocirculatory asthenia ("soldier's heart") doubled for the whole group of draftees (white and coloured) between December, 1942, and December, 1943, but went up *five times* for the Negroes alone. "This may represent the influence of war stress and strain, and to some extent it may also reflect the desire of the registrants to avoid service." Thus the group which above all has the most reason to reject the democratic slogans under which the war is being fought is also the group which shows the greatest increase in psychiatric symptoms when confronted with conscription into the armed forces.

These psychiatric rejections indicate not only the individual's desire not to enter the army but also, often, *the army's desire not to accept the individual if he obviously does not want to serve.* From what I gather from people who have been through the army examination routine, as I have not, the doctors usually reject draftees whose general "attitude," personality or overt statements during the psychiatric examination indicate they may cause "trouble" in the army. And a marked unwillingness to enter the army seems to be regarded, reasonably enough, as threatening future "headaches." Here the authorities confront a nice question of morality *vs.* expediency. The draftee who clearly wants to avoid service is, of course,

a socially reprehensible person, a "draft dodger" psychologically if not legally, who should be punished by being shoved into uniform at once. But this moralistic approach is not expedient, since a single cog with an antagonistic will of its own can cause all sorts of friction in a mass production machine like the army. So, "for the good of the service," it seems better to keep out such cogs. Thus we get the curious result that individual rebellion is in one sense hopeless but in another effective in causing a degree of friction out of all proportion to its size—and both for the same reason: because the military machine is so big and so well organised. Here we may have an important principle of action against the authorities in control of great totalitarian institutions like armies: the co-operation, whether willing or just submissive, of the individual is necessary if he is to be useful as a slave-citizen or as a soldier. It is just not worth the trouble to punish or to reshape individuals who refuse to fit into the pattern. Here is the last line of battle for the dissenter; he is of no use to the army if his dissent goes deep enough. In the total state, the issue cannot be avoided by "rejecting" the dissenter; there is no area to which to reject him. Prison or the firing squad has to be *its* 4F.

Too great willingness to serve, in some circumstances may cause the authorities as much worry as too little. The good soldier Schweik found himself in jail, one recalls, when he had himself wheeled to the recruiting office in an invalid's chair, waving his crutches, and shouting "Long live the Emperor Franz-Joseph!" and "On to Belgrade!" That was in Prague in August, 1914, and the Austrian authorities seem to have suspected Schweik's patriotic ardour of a tinge of irony. A more modern instance is the story that is told of a well known Surrealist painter who escaped military service in Paris at the beginning of this war by excessive manifestations of military ardour and patriotism when he was called up for service. Entering his draft headquarters, where every one was plunged in the deepest gloom, he threw out his chest and saluted smartly on all sides, shouting 'Oui, mon capitaine!" and "Vive la France!" They rejected him as mentally unbalanced.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

We have endeavoured in the past few volumes of "NOW" to present a selection of writing as international, both in appeal and in impulse, as is possible in a collection of literature written almost completely in English, and representing a certain relatively clear direction of thought. In particular we have given considerable space to writings by American authors or concerning American culture. In Volume 3 were published items by Henry Miller and E. E. Cummings, and in the same collection commenced the series of articles by Denis Preston and Albert McCarthy on American Negro Folksong. In the present volume we are publishing an article by Dwight Macdonald on "The Psychology of Killing," a chapter from an American translation of the autobiography of Victor Serge, who is now living in Mexico, and a story by Frederick Ramsey. The first two of these items are reproduced from the New York monthly, *Politics*. In later volumes we shall include further selections of American writing.

D. S. Savage

E. M. Forster and the Dilemma of Liberalism

(Part II)

It is possibly the realization of something of this which led Forster, broadly speaking, to abandon the personal drama and to embrace the social issues which are clearly displayed in his next novel, *Howards End* (1910). There is no doubt whatever as to the social orientation of this novel and its characterization, nor as to its bearing upon the logic of Forster's development. From the point reached in *The Longest Journey* there were two possible paths for one in Forster's situation : either to affirm the reality of the spiritual, and thus to justify the drama of personal salvation, by placing the individual (and thus by inference his social circumstances) in the ultimate perspectives of existence; or to affirm the primary reality of the social and to reduce the spiritual to an epiphenomenon dependent upon the social pattern. The first alternative would have made possible a continuation and development of the personal drama, and thus, conceivably, the transformation of Forster into a genuine creator; the second could only have necessitated a transition from the personal to the social level, a movement from the centre to the periphery; which was, in fact, the result.

Howards End must be interpreted from this point of view. Here is an evidently allegorical contrast between the inner world of personal existence, represented by the cultured sisters Helen and Margaret Schlegel, and the outer world of the practical organization of living represented by the business-like, British-to-the-backbone, empire-building Wilcoxes. But before we move on to a consideration of the relationship between the two families, the focal point of the novel must be considered.

That focal point is money. Hardly are the Schlegels introduced before the subject of their investments is touched upon. Money, indeed, is the *leit-motif* which accompanies the Schlegels throughout the book. And it is poverty, in the character of Leonard Bast, which underscores their wealth and culture. The significance of this bringing to the surface of what had hitherto been kept in concealment (in order to permit the strictly personal drama) hardly needs to be emphasized. *Howards End* is in one of its aspects a justification of economic privilege, but the recognition of the individual's dependence upon social circumstances destroys the possibility of the drama of personal salvation, and substitutes the drama of social relationships.

Leonard rises, spectre-like and accusing, from the depths of the world outside the social hot-house of the economically and culturally privileged, to confront the Schlegels with the harsh realities of their situation. But how subjectively, and with what a suspicious bias he is presented will appear from

the manner in which he is pushed on to the scene by his author:

> The boy, Leonard Bast, stood at the extreme verge of gentility. He was not in the abyss, but he could see it, and at times people whom he knew had dropped in, and counted no more. He knew that he was poor, and would admit it: he would have died sooner than confess any inferiority to the rich. This may be splendid of him. But he was inferior to most rich people, there is not the least doubt of it. He was not as courteous as the average rich man, nor as intelligent, nor as healthy, nor as lovable. His mind and his body had been alike underfed, because he was poor . . .

Because he does not enjoy the financial advantages of the Schlegels, his aspirations towards culture are made to appear pathetic in their hopelessness. But the character of Leonard Bast is not the result of authentic, disinterested observation of life: he is unconsciously falsified, in a manner which will be considered below, to fit within the preconceived interpretation of reality which underpins the structure of the novel.

The argument of *Howards End,* at all times implicit and at times declared, is that culture and the good life depend upon economic security, which in the capitalistic world of the time means privilege. "To trust people is a luxury in which only the wealthy can indulge; the poor cannot afford it"—such statements as this are intermittent in the early parts of the book. In Chapter VII the following conversation takes place between Margaret Schlegel and her aunt, Mrs. Munt, a conversation which sets the course for Margaret's progression throughout the story:

> "I hope to risk things all my life."
>
> "Oh, Margaret, most dangerous."
>
> "But after all," she continued with a smile, "there's never any great risk as long as you have money."
>
> "Oh, shame! What a shocking speech!"
>
> "Money pads the edge of things," said Miss Schlegel. "God help those who have none."
>
> "But this is something quite new!" said Mrs. Munt, who collected new ideas as a squirrel collects nuts, and was especially attracted by those that are portable.
>
> "New for me; sensible people have acknowledged it for years. You and I and the Wilcoxes stand upon money as upon islands. It is so firm beneath our feet that we forget its very existence. It's only when we see someone near us tottering that we realize all that an independent income means. Last night, when we were talking up here round the fire, I began to think that the very soul of the world is economic, and that the lowest abyss is not the absence of love, but the absence of coin."
>
> "I call that rather cynical."
>
> "So do I. But Helen and I, we ought to remember, when we are tempted to criticize others, that we are standing on these islands, and that most of the others are down below the surface of the sea. The poor cannot always reach those whom they want to love, and they can hardly ever escape from those whom they love no longer. We rich can. Imagine the tragedy last June if Helen and Paul Wilcox had been poor people, and couldn't invoke railways and motor-cars to part them."
>
> "That's more like Socialism," said Mrs. Munt suspiciously.
>
> "Call it what you like. I call it going through life with one's hand spread open on the table. I'm tired of these rich people who pretend to be poor, and think it shows a nice mind to ignore the piles of money that keep their feet above the waves. I stand each year upon six hundred pounds, and Helen upon the same, and Tibby will stand upon eight, and as fast as our pounds crumble away into the sea they are renewed—from the sea, yes, from the sea. And all our thoughts are the thoughts of six-hundred-pounders, and all our speeches; and because we don't want to steal umbrellas ourselves, we forget that below the sea people do want to steal them, and do steal them sometimes, and that what's a joke up here is down there reality—"

. . . "Do tell me this, at all events. Are you for the rich or for the poor?"

"Too difficult. Ask me another. Am I for poverty or for riches? For riches. Hurrah for riches!"

"For riches!" echoed Mrs. Munt, having, as it were, at last secured her nut.

"Yes. For riches. Money for ever!"

"So am I, and so, I am afraid, are most of my acquaintances at Swanage, but I am surprised that you agree with us."

That conversation occurs after the Schlegels' first encounter with Leonard Bast. After a second encounter, at which they find out something of his private life, the Schlegels attend a debating society at which the question is discussed of how a philanthropic millionaire ought to dispose of his money. "Mr. Bast" is taken as the hypothetical poor man whose condition is to be improved by the millionaire's bounty, and Margaret, after listening to various propositions, intervenes with the suggestion that he should be given the money itself.

"Money's educational. It's far more educational than the things it buys . . . When your Socialism comes it may be different, and we may think in terms of commodities instead of cash. Till it comes give people cash, for it is the warp of civilization, whatever the woof may be. The imagination ought to play upon money and realize it vividly, for it's the—the second most important thing in the world. It is so slurred over and hushed up, there is so little clear thinking—oh, political economy, of course, but so few of us think clearly about our own private incomes, and admit that independent thoughts are in nine cases out of ten the result of independent means. Money: give Mr. Bast money, and don't bother about his ideals. He'll pick those up for himself.

On the other side of the Schlegels to Leonard Bast, however, and representing the organized, coercive practical life which guarantees to them that private income which makes their cultured existence possible, stands Henry Wilcox, efficient, practical, masterful, but spiritually and emotionally unintegrated. The Wilcoxes' guarantees however have as it were a spiritual aspect—that of the "outer life" which Forster takes as antithetical to the "inner life" represented by the Schlegels. The Wilcoxes are introduced on this very note, which is struck almost immediately after Helen's return, at the beginning of the tale, from her visit to Howards End, Mrs. Wilcox's country house, where she has a brief erotic passage with the Wilcoxes' youngest son, Paul.

"To think that because you and a young man meet for a moment, there must be all these telegrams and anger," supplied Margaret.

Helen nodded.

"I've often thought about it, Helen. It's one of the most interesting things in the world. The truth is that there is a great outer life that you and I have never touched—a life in which telegrams and anger count. Personal relations, that we think supreme, are not supreme there. There love means marriage settlements, death, death duties. So far I'm clear. But here's my difficulty. This outer life, though obviously horrid, often seems the real one—there's grit in it. It does breed character. Do personal relations lead to sloppiness in the end?"

"Oh, Meg, that's what I felt, only not so clearly, when the Wilcoxes were so competent, and seemed to have their hands on all the ropes."

"Don't you feel it now?"

"I remember Paul at breakfast," said Helen quietly. "I shall never forget him. He had nothing to fall back upon. I know that personal relations are the real life, for ever and ever."

"Amen!"

The respective positions of Leonard Bast and Henry Wilcox have an obvious symbolic importance, in that the leanings of the Schlegel sisters

are divided between the two. The impulsive and idealistic Helen reacts vehemently against Mr. Wilcox, and her reaction drives her towards Leonard Bast, who has suffered as a result of the business-man's human irresponsibility (and whose character as a *victim* is further emphasized by the revelation that his bedraggled wife was once Mr. Wilcox's mistress). Margaret, on the other hand, wiser and more level-headed, so we are told, is drawn towards the Wilcox family and led to associate herself with the values they represent.

> "If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in, no fields even. Just savagery. No—perhaps not even that. Without their spirit life might never have moved out of protoplasm. More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it."

The dramatic action of the book develops out of the schism which takes place between the Schlegel sisters as each moves further along her chosen path, Margaret towards the acceptance of the "outer life," expressed in her engagement to the widowed Mr. Wilcox, and Helen towards her pursuit of a somewhat vaguely conceived "ideal." The scales are, however, heavily biassed against Helen, who is used as a mere foil to her sister's maturer wisdom. That Helen's antagonism to her sister's engagement to Mr. Wilcox is a modified one, and that inwardly she is reconciled to it and even approves of it, appears from a conversation between the sisters following an outburst of Helen's to Mr. Wilcox on the subject of his responsibility for the misfortunes of Leonard Bast.

> Margaret . . . gave her sister a thorough scolding. She censured her, not for disapproving of the engagement, but for throwing over her disapproval a veil of mystery. . . . Helen was silent for a minute, and then burst into a queer speech, which cleared the air. "Go on and marry him. I think you're splendid; and if anyone can pull it off, you will." Margaret denied that there was anything to "pull off," but she continued: "Yes, there is, and I wasn't up to it with Paul. I can only do what's easy. I can only entice and be enticed. I can't, and won't, attempt difficult relations . . . But you, you're different. You're a heroine . . . You mean to keep proportion, and that's heroic, it's Greek, and I don't see why it shouldn't succeed with you. Go on and fight with him and help him. Don't ask *me* for help, or even for sympathy. Henceforward I'm going my own way. I mean to be thorough, because thoroughness is easy."

The morality of the story, and the conclusion we are supposed to draw from it, are plain. "Only connect . . . " exhort's the book's epigraph; and Magaret it is, we are asked to believe, who accomplishes the connection.

In this novel, however, once again, Forster's work suffers artistically as the result of the confusion between the symbolical and the realistic treatment of his subject. A clearer and deeper mind, we can safely assume, taking the theme of the relationship of the inner life to the outer, would manipulate somewhat different symbols from "Wilcoxes" and "Schlegels" and would reach somewhat different conclusions from those of *Howards End*. For Forster has not in fact stated the real issue either helpfully or sincerely. What he has succeeded in doing, and in doing quite clearly enough, is to reveal, in the pre-determined and therefore falsified treatment of his subject, the central predicament and equivocation inherent in the compromising liberal mentality.

The crucial falsification is not that of the characters of the Wilcoxes, who are presented honestly and objectively enough, but of the Schlegels and Leonard Bast. And it is here, perhaps, that we touch upon the psychological

compulsion which inclined Forster's mind towards his admixture of the symbolical and the realistic—namely, in its effect in securing the falsification of symbolical truth necessary for the adaptation of the realities represented by the words "culture" and "poverty" to the far from disinterested pre-conceptions of the bourgeois liberal point of view.

"It is private life that holds out the mirror to infinity; personal intercourse, and that alone, that ever hints at a personality beyond our daily vision." Such, in characteristically Forsterian phraseology, is the Schlegel viewpoint. Suppose we grant, then, what is so almost squeamishly proffered —that, symbolically, the Schlegels represent the inner life of personality in contrast to the outer life of organization represented by the Wilcoxes. Can there in fact ever be such a reconciliation between the two as is symbolized by Margaret's marriage to Mr. Wilcox? To speak more explicitly, can Culture only save itself from inward debility by an alliance with the State, can the life of the spirit maintain and strengthen itself only by a compromise with the Prince of this world?* Is such a reconciliation, or compromise, a spiritual achievement or a betrayal?

From the spiritual, personal and cultural point of view it is clearly a betrayal; it is the equivocal and deluded attempt to serve two masters which is spoken of in the New Testament. That Forster is uneasy about this is shown not only by his splitting of the Schlegel viewpoint into two, but also by his hesitant treatment of the relations between Margaret and Mr. Wilcox, for their relationship crashes on a critical issue, and is only saved, rather unconvincingly, by the entirely fortuitous circumstances which make Henry Wilcox, at the last moment, a "broken man," and drive him humbly to his wife for protection.

What, indeed, is this "connection," but the bridging of the two worlds which were, in the earlier novels, held apart as spiritual antitheses: the world of falsity and convention and the world of the genuine and natural: the "pretended" and the "real"? Twists of presentation aside, in what essential respect can the Wilcoxes be said to differ from the Pembrokes in *The Longest Journey?* Yet while, in the earlier novel, for the sake of the personal drama which is enacted between those antitheses, the Pembrokes are represented as something at all costs to be eschewed and shunned, in the later book, where the personal drama gives place to the social, the same type, with a few changes, is represented as admirable and to be courted.

What is the reason for this change of attitude and the decision to compromise? The answer, it is not difficult to perceive, lies in the weakness and invalidity of the inner life, of "the real," as conceived by Forster, which, presented in naturalistic terms, has not sufficient inner vitality to maintain itself as a centre of spiritual energy in independence of the outer region of practical life. Forster's fundamental error, as I have tried to show (and to show, too, its conditioning factors) consists of invoking the spiritual principle and then referring it for its ultimate sanction not to God, to the supernatural—a resort which would have had the effect of thoroughly disequilibrizing Forster's mental pattern and bringing it to a new and revolutionary centrality—but to Nature. That Forster's ethical naturalism

**vide* Chapter XXVII: "Talk as one would, *Mr. Wilcox was king of this world*, the superman, with his own morality, whose head remained in the clouds." (my italics).

will not bear the spiritual burdens which are placed upon it we have already seen. This inability to support the personal values represented by the Schlegels by an appeal to any higher order of being than that embodied by the mundanely "mysterious" figure of the first Mrs. Wilcox with her tiresome wisp of hay (with the dew still on it) deprives the antithesis between Schlegels and Wilcoxes of its absolute character and therefore of all real value as a statement of the relationship between the inner and outer realms of existence—or the realm of subjectivity and that of objectivization For neither can the Schlegel sisters really be accepted as adequately symbolizing the life of the spirit, nor can Leonard Bast be regarded as a truthful representation of the urge towards culture unsupported by economic privilege. The Schlegels are simply what they are "realistically" represented to be—two specimens of the bourgeois leisured parasite upon culture. And all that the book leaves us with is a statement of the real relations between "cultured, sensitive and democratic" liberalism and the capitalistic structure of Edwardian society which permits and guarantees its harmless, ineffectual and even charming existence.

Here it is that Forster's confusion of symbolical and realistic treatment serves the purpose of so doctoring the issue that is conforms to the pre-requirements of an outlook obviously conditioned by its liberal bourgeois background. Forster's realistic presentation of the Schlegels enables him to get around the responsibility of declaring that his novel is an allegory of the inner life. Quite so. But if the Schlegels are only—the Schlegels; nothing more or less; then the book is deprived of inner significance. Forster's confused method enables him to retain the overtones of symbolical significance while presenting an apparently straightforward realistic narrative: it is no wonder that the book has been popular.

Perhaps we may exonerate Forster of the charge of sinister intent in deliberately falsifying his presentation of the Schlegels, at the price of denying them the symbolical significance which they are presumed to possess. But it is much more difficult to avoid making the charge in the case of his presentation of Leonard Bast; and there is the further reflection to which this leads, namely, that Leonard is presented in such a way as to emphasize the Schlegels' claim to symbolical significance as the bearers of cultural values and the inner life. For the implication of Leonard's failure, owing to inferior social advantages, to attain the inner life, is that the inner life itself is made possible only by the possession of social advantages such as those the Schlegels enjoy, and from this it follows that, in the author's mind, the Schlegels do therefore possess symbolical significance!

The manner of Forster's introduction of Leonard Bast and his evident determination that Leonard should be made to fit the preconception that culture is secondary to riches, has already been noted. This portrait is the least convincing fabrication in the book, and the one which most plainly calls into question the author's fundamental seriousness and responsibility as an artist. Now, it simply is not true than an inferior social position automatically deprives its victim of the possibility of attaining to the inner life, any more than it is true that the possession of social advantages guarantees spiritual development. It is not even true, heaven knows, that the average rich man is as Forster states, more courteous, intelligent and lovable than the average

poor man. A certain New Testament injunction might have been remembered here—as in other places* There is no need to argue this point, which is self-evident. The wretched Leonard is a lay figure, an effigy made to walk and talk in such a way as to bolster up the Mammonish philosophy which inspires the book. Culture is *not* dependent upon wealth; it is only to the parasites of the spirit that it appears as an object which can be externally appropriated. Nor can Forster's pressing of this point home find any response in the mind of the genuine champion of the dispossessed, for the depth of his concern with the sufferings of the underprivileged masses may be judged from the fact that it is Henry Wilcox with whom Margaret, "keen to derive the modern capitalist from the warriors and hunters of the past," "connects."

Leonard is disposed of by death, and his elimination glossed over with an outburst of Forster's special lyricism:

> . . . the time for telegrams and anger was over, and it seemed wisest that the hands of Leonard should be folded on his breast and be filled with flowers. Here was the father; leave it at that. Let Squalor be turned into Tragedy, whose eyes are the stars, and whose hands hold the sunset and the dawn.

III.

The foregoing delineation of the inner development of Forster's mind as revealed in his novels should have clarified the nature of the compromise or betrayal which lies at the root of "cultured, sensitive and democratic liberalism," a compromise which cannot but vitiate its perpetrator's grasp of reality and deprive his mind of creative purpose. But if my interpretation of the interior dialectic of Forster's novels has any validity, then it follows that *A Passage to India* (1924) must have its relation to it. What, briefly, is that relationship?

With the resolution of the conflict between what is called, in *A Room with a View,* "the real and the pretended", signified by the union of the Schlegels with the Wilcoxes, the novelist's own inner thought-conflict, expressing the inner conflict which lies at the bottom of all the novels, comes to an end, and there is no longer any imperative urge towards fictional creation. Forster has exhausted his theme, and the dramatic materials are missing. More, his interest has moved outward, peripherally, from the personal drama to a concern with the generalized problems of society, and it is now possible to speak of him (*vide* Burra) as "an artist on the fringe of social reform."

The only way in which the novelist can finally exploit his basic situation is by transporting his mechanical dramatic apparatus to some external situation which it happens approximately and fortuitously to fit. And so, in *A Passage to India,* we have the Anglo-Indian world of Turtons and Burtons on the one side and on the other that of Aziz and his compatriots, with Cyril Fielding, the liberal educationalist, in between, and Mrs. Moore, with the counterpart of Mrs. Wilcox, anomalously bridging both worlds. But the apparatus hardly fits the drama, which, indeed, exiguous as it is, takes

*The entire spirit of Forster's work, but especially his treatment of the question of poverty, is an offence against the spirit of Christianity, and the tedious "charm" which is spread like a veneer over the surface of his work is insufficient to cover the boredom and banality underneath. *Howards End* should be compared, for its treatment of poverty, with some such genuinely *Christian* work as Leon Bloy's *The Woman Who Was Poor.*

place, not in the battlefield of any individual soul, but on the plane of external action and political issues, where it is brought only to a precarious and inconclusive termination. The conflict is external to the author's mind.

A Passage to India is written at the extreme edge of Forster's personal pattern. It is hard to see how any but a mechanical and inwardly meaningless work of fiction could have succeeded it, and the fact that it has been followed by silence need cause us no great surprise. Certain features of the novel, however, have an interest in the light of the interpretation of Forster which I have proposed.

If the book can be said to have a hero, that hero must be Cyril Fielding, a character who evidently embodies his creator's own outlook upon life. In Fielding we find a union of the qualities seen as separate in *Howards End*. Fielding is humane, cultured, enlightened, progressive, but he is also capable, reliable and self-assured: he has a sense of the importance of "personal relationships", but he also has "grit" and his hands are definitely "on the ropes". Ideally, then, he should be a harmonious figure. Yet it seems that there is some dissatisfaction on his author's part with the finality of the values which he embodies.

> . . . he felt dubious and discontented suddenly, and wondered whether he was really and truly successful as a human being. After forty years' experience he had learnt to manage his life and make the best of it on advanced European lines, had developed his personality, explored his limitations, controlled his passions—and he had done it all without becoming either pedantic or worldly. A creditable achievement; but as the moment passed, he felt he ought to have been working at something else the whole time—he didn't know at what, never would know, never could know, and that was why he felt sad.

These feelings of self-dissatisfaction are again touched on at the end of the book, where Fielding is speaking to Aziz of his marriage to Mrs. Moore's daughter, Stella, who, he feels, unlike himself, is "after something" —the "something", whatever it is which is included in this vague gesture, being that, evidently, which is outside the scope of his limited, rationalistic scheme of life.

But the most significant factor in the novel is the emotional background provided by the Marabar Caves, around which the action centres. It is the visit of Aziz, Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested to the caves which precipitates the drama, and throughout the novel the echoing *"Boum—boum"* of the caves supplies an insistent undercurrent to the moods and thoughts of the characters.

The caves' horrible echo is, however, a more elaborate repetition of something which has evidently lurked always at the edge of Forster's mind, for it has found expression in previous writings. It is indicated by the description of the infernal region in which the principal character in an early story finds himself after death, through his smug, unheroic life; and it is indicated also in the metaphor of the goblins "walking quietly over the universe" to describe the Beethoven Symphony in *Howards End*. ("Panic and emptiness", the message of the goblins, being the words which Helen has previously applied to the inner life of the Wilcoxes.) The caves reiterate the same message of meaninglessness and nullity, but more insistently and overpoweringly. The echo murmurs: "Pathos, piety, courage —they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value." And the terror of the Marabar lay in the fact that it "robbed

infinity and eternity of their vastness, the only quality that accommodates them to mankind." Not only does the echo of the caves prolong itself throughout the story to which it provides such a menacing undertone, but it has the effect of undermining and disintegrating Mrs. Moore's hold on life, and ultimately of destroying her. When we recollect that Mrs. Moore is to *A Passage to India* what Mrs. Wilcox is to *Howards End*—that she is the "elemental character" who represents what appears to be the highest value to which Forster can appeal to sanction his interpretation of life, the metaphorical implications of her disintegration and its occasion are ominous, to say the very least. Nor is there anything in Forster's occasional and miscellaneous writings of the past twenty years to dispel the misgivings to which a consideration of the sequence of his novels, ending on this ominous note, gives rise.

Frederic Ramsey

Artist's Life—The Story of Vanicilio Meban

Vanicilio Meban paid no more attention to details of his early life than we would care to pay in reading of it. His first perceptions were of crib-bars, formula bottles, round forms and bright rattles. It was not until he developed a certain ability for swallowing these objects whole that his mentors began to fear for his sanity, and to conclude that he was to be an artist.

Almost the first clinical recorded result of his early experiments was prolonged nausea. But with the enlargement of his glands in puberty, he acquired a greater-than-average talent for painless ingestion. It is not precisely recorded at what time he ceased to be nauseated by his vaulting gastronomic ambitions.

But it is related that at the age of sixteen, Meban astonished his teachers one day by consuming a notable meal in the course of his normal class exercises. It is recorded by them that he was served bureau drawers, as apéritif; that from them he progressed to six dolls, dressed in layers of Alençon lace, as hors d'œuvre. For entrée, there was a choice; his hungry, glowing eyes flicked eagerly when the servant drew a word-picture of a delicately carved sofa, stuffed in horsehair, jellied in chilled *aspic de listérine*. Then Vanicilio's hands fell sensuously upon the soft, flowing lines of a Louis XVI. bed, which had been left on the serving-table by some careless high school principal. He stroked the tufted brocade cover thrown across its broad, heaving thighs; sighed, and lifted this morsel to his well-developed jaw.

He dressed the *salade fines herbes* for himself. For condiments, he used rags torn from the clothing of young children. He liked their faint, spicy odor, which reminded him of a moulting snake's skin on a lazy, hot summer day.

Vanicilio lingered long over his dessert-selection. Those lucky enough to attend this occasion later remembered that here he seemed to hesitate, to be almost afraid, before making the final choice which determined the later development of his high calling. For a moment, it seemed as if he would turn to a seventeenth-century couch of the type provided for Phèdres of the Comédie Française, when they arrive at that moment decreed by Racine for the lingering death brought on by the poisons prescribed in his text.

Those assembled in the small school-building gasped. But no—at the very last possible moment he transferred all his attention to a *bombe Prince de Galles* made of the variety of stuffed peacocks so often found in early New England homes. As the applause died away a teacher handed him the Silver Dollar presented annually by the Woman's Club of his village for music appreciation.

This triumphant completion of his first important test assured Meban a brilliant and comfortable career. Very soon they were singing him in all the schools. One critic who had first sensed the value of Meban's contribution to culture wrote that a thrice-happy combination of events had conspired to bring Vanicilio on the scene in the years immediately following the first world war. In the first place, the critic claimed, his epicurean grace was sure to find mild favour (this was the best that could possibly be accorded) in that group of émigrés who moved from Paris to New York and back again in order to escape being labelled as émigrés. That was the critic's first and well-taken event.

The second event, according to this critic, was the existence of Prohibition. With this law in full force, it seemed providentially fitting that Vanicilio never cared to deplete by one precious ounce the limited stocks of gin then available.

"Never mind the gin, darling," Vanicilio would remark to his hostess in those days, "just have them send the bathtub along. I hope it's pure Circassian marble."

The critic had run out of events by this time; so the third one was omitted. Perhaps this was because the depression arrived before he was able to complete his definitive study of Meban's career. And with the depression, Vanicilio's progress was dreadfully limited. He was reduced to spending days in empty skyscrapers, hiding from persistent, dead souls who thrust apples upon him at every corner. And in the course of this horrible period of enforced exile, his consumption had to descend to the utilitarian level of skyscraper fittings. It is in this way that many of the more elaborate cornices of the Chrysler Building were slowly eroded. Mystified stockholders were told that the weather was unusually corrosive.

The Empire State Building, too, knew the ravages of Vanicilio's insatiable gastro-intestinal tract. In the newspapers, citizens read that the mooring mast on this building had been impractical from the beginning; what reporters were concealing was that as fast as a new mast was set up, Vanicilio was there in the dead of night to chew it. Thus it became impractical to moor dirigibles to a non-existent mast.

Better days came with the Federal Art Project. The directors of the Index of American Art gave Vanicilio a superb assignment; they let him loose

in the backwoods and provinces of U.S.A., giving him *carte blanche* to satisfy his appetite. In this way, the American Revival was swallowed *in toto* by Vanicilio, who was the most diligent field worker the Project had ever known. Williamsburg alone escaped, as this was backed by private funds under the corporate sponsorship of Free Private Enterprise.

But much was still left for Meban. At one gulp, he swallowed the entire contents of the Mercer collection of early Americana, housed in a tiled, moated, ramparted, feudal castle of Doylestown, Pennsylvania. And on the ensuing morning, he gulped down the castle itself.

As often happens, Meban was rewarded for this application to his work by a southern senator, who found out about his unselfish devotion. The senator introduced a bill to kill the project immediately. The directors sent Vanicilio on a field trip to Alabama, where he ate the senator, but it was too late. The bill had already been passed.

Meban stated that this was the greatest sacrifice he had ever made for his art; of all the tough, stringy, smoke-and-whisky-ridden politicians he had ever consumed, he declared the Alabama senator had been the least delectable.

But life is short and art, ungrateful. The immediate consequences of consuming the senator was the development, in Vanicilio, of an intestinal obstruction. This in turn became a cancer of the abdominal wall. And as the fatal disease began to eat its way through him, and to metastasize, a surprising transformation came over all his body.

When metastasis occurs in an ordinary cancer patient, the process is characterised by recurrence throughout the body of the original, destructive cancer. But with Meban, no sooner had the cancer consumed part of the live tissue which hung on his corpulent frame, than there grew in turn a new object. Most often the transformation took place while he slept; so that sometimes, in place of a wrist, he awoke to find a garter; or in place of an elbow, the T-joint from a washing-machine. When his hairs began to drop out, peacock feathers grew in their place; his left leg became a merry, jangling limb of cockle-shells, armadillo claws, and cam-shafts.

It was revealed to Vanicilio Meban in this manner that the deeds of his past would rest upon him in the days of his weakness; and his body gave forth a sanctimonious odour.

Meban's right leg, however, refused to decompose. There was in it that stubbornness for life which yet persists in bone-lime sediment deposited on the heroic battlefields of to-day's world. Thus Vanicilio cherished the hope that a miracle might be performed with his leg. And in order that this miracle could effectuate itself under ideal conditions, he caused to be constructed an enormous bed cradle. It was to be of the sort used in hospitals to hold bedclothes away from plastercast legs while they bake to hardness. It took three weekdays and three weeknights of double shifts in the physics laboratory of Meban's hospital to perfect this giant project.

When at last it was completed, Meban himself placed the cradle over his right leg in the dead of night. Neither nurse nor doctor was permitted to gaze upon its mystery. As he worked feverishly with the object—it resembled a dirigible hangar in shape, and was almost twice his length—Vanicilio's metamorphosed frame gave forth many new sounds in the still silence of the early-morning hours. Nurses listening at his keyhole heard

the jingle-jangle of cockle-shells; the far-off tinkling of a sleigh-bell; the deep, protesting belch of a giant liner's foghorn; the steady hum of a Singer sewing machine, and ratcheted percussion from a turning windlass.

On the ninth day following the installation of the cradle on a second bed near his own (this had become quite a problem, incidentally, for the hospital authorities insisted upon charging him as two patients), it became evident to all that Vanicilio Meban must soon expire.

The critic who had written of Meban's early promise was still trying to think of a third thrice-happy event when the artist's friends were crowding into his hospital room. Many of these friends dated back to the days of his bath-tub fame; surrounded by them, Meban expelled his last breath through a hissing gas-jet fed from an oxygen tank. It was plain that by this time there was no flesh and blood of Vanicilio left; his corpse was a sanctified miscellany of old brocades, feathers, pinions, and bellows.

That moment for which all had waited finally arrived. The doctor in charge of Meban's case stepped up to the second bed housing the cradle. He hesitated for a second before touching the white sheet stretched over it. Then with a quick gesture, he threw the linen aside. The waiting group then saw what had become of Meban's leg. For under the cradle there reposed a rather dignified black coffin.

PATTERN OF FRUSTRATION

Four Drawings By Stanley Jackson

The work of Stanley Jackson has not yet received the attention that it undoubtedly merits, the main reason for this being that it deals with subjects which society prefers to ignore-death, frustration, the hopelessness of individual life and the pointlessness of accepting the current solutions. In this sense Stanley Jackson is a Romantic in outlook for he sees man as a victim of his environment, and has no faith in the political panaceas which glib-tongued orators espouse so convincingly, and with such cost to mankind. In the past he had paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy, but his present development represents a withdrawal from the academic field towards a personal maturity which can only be expressed in less rigid forms.

Pattern of Frustration is, in my opinion, one of the clearest statements of the evolution of the individual in society. In the first reproduction we see the apparently solid footing suddenly merging into nothingness, and from this moment the individual is caught up in the struggle which can end only in defeat. The symbolism of the second phase needs no explanation while the third part shows the ephemeral moment when an ecstatic realisation is glimpsed. The final stage is portrayed in the last reproduction-the moment vanishes to be followed by the inevitable frustration-either the individual has to accept and adapt himself, or he faces annihilation. From this dilemma there is no escape.

A. J. McCARTHY.

2 PHASE OF INTROSPECTION

3. THE EXQUISITE MOMENT OF SCINTILLATION

4. ULTIMATE DESPAIR

Victor Serge

The Revolution at Dead-end (1926-1928)

It is raining, the docks are black. Two rows of street lights hang at long intervals in the night; between them are the black waters of the Neva. On either side, the dark city. Inhospitable. It has not yet emerged from its wretchedness. Four days before, I had seen a great glow over the night sky above Berlin, which had just gone through an inflation more fabulous than our own. We had never spent more than a million on a lemon; in Berlin a postage stamp had cost trillions.

Why does this despondency persist on our Russian soil? Leaving the customs-house, we are met by a skeleton outfit splashing through the mud puddles—ghost-like horse and rattling carriage, as though we were living in Gogol's time, entering some forlorn city. . . . It has always been like this. Returning to Russian soil is always poignant. "Russian soil," the poet Tyuchev writes, "Christ in bondage has covered every inch of you." And the Marxist explains it: "The production of commodities was never sufficient, the means of communication were always lacking . . ." The poor (and there are some Christs among them), slaves to want, have always been forced to set out bare-foot, with knapsacks on their backs, wandering from one steppe to another, never stopping in their flight, always seeking. . . .

I find myself in a peaceful but depressing atmosphere. Lutovinov has committed suicide. The organizer of the metal-workers had been wandering about at night with Radek in Berlin. The cocktails of the Kurfuerstendamm burned his throat. "What messes the bourgeoisie invents to intoxicate itself with!—What am I going to do when I get home? I've told the Central Committee over and over again that we must re-examine the salary problem. Our metal-workers are going hungry. So the Sanitary Commission of the party sent me abroad for my health . . ."

Glazman has committed suicide. Few people are aware of this incident, which took place in the entourage of Trotsky, president of the Supreme War Council. It is spoken of only in whispers. And Glazman is not the only one.

Expelled from the party for having opposed the "New Line," some young men have gotten hold of revolvers—to turn against themselves. Young women, as everybody knows, prefer veronal. What good is life if the party refuses us the right to serve? This new-born world is calling us, we belong to it alone—and in its name somebody spits in our faces. "You are unworthy . . ." Are we unworthy because we represent the throbbing body and unworthy thought of the revolution? It is better to die. The curve of suicides is rising. An extraordinary session of the Central Control Commission is called.

Eugenie Bogdanovna Bosh has committed suicide. Nothing has been printed abroad about the death of one of the greatest Bolshevik figures. Since the Civil War, she had headed with Piatakov the first Soviet government in the Ukraine; dealt severely with the difficulties in Astrakhan, and the counter-revolutionary peasants in Perm; she had commanded armies—and she had always slept with a revolver under her pillow. The party discussion in 1923, the juggling with workers' democracy by the Central Committee with its ambiguous resolutions, the purging of the universities, the dictatorship of the secretaries—all this saddened her, while sickness hollowed out her strong square fighter's face with its deep eyes. When Lenin died, she made her decision. What could be done, with the party misled and divided? With Ilyich gone, what was there to wait for, when she could do nothing herself? Lying in bed, she shot herself in the temple. The committees deliberated on the question of funeral rites. The formalists argued that suicide, even when justified by an incurable disease, remained an undisciplined act. Besides, in this case the act of suicide bore witness to a spirit of opposition. No national funeral, only a local one. No urn in the Kremlin wall; a place according to her official rank with the Communists in the Novo-Devichy Cemetery . . . Forty lines of obituary in *Pravda*. Preobrazhensky declared that this was nothing but underhanded censorship. When she had been resisting the Germans, the Ukrainian nationalists, the Whites, the rural Vendée, what humorist would have inquired into her official rank in the party hierarchy? The very idea did not exist then. Preobrazhensky was requested to hold his tongue. The fleshly spectre of Lenin, stripped of all substance and of all spirit, lies in his Mausoleum, while the hierarchy, living and devouring like unnatural beasts, has only just begun to show us. . . .

Serge Yessenin, our matchless poet, has committed suicide. The telephone rang: "Come quickly, Yessenin has killed himself . . . " I rushed out into the snow, went up to a room in the Hotel International. I could hardly recognize him; he no longer looked the same. The evening before, he had been drinking quite naturally and then had said goodbye to his friends. "I want to be alone. . . ." Waking up sadly that morning, he felt the desire to write something. He had neither pencil nor fountain-pen in his room; there was no ink in the hotel ink-stand, but he found a razor-blade with which he slashed his wrist. And with a rusty pen wet with his own blood, Yessenin wrote his last lines:

Au revoir, my friend, au revoir . . .
. . . There is nothing new about dying in this life,
but there is surely nothing new about living.

He asked that no one be permitted to enter. They found him hanging, a suitcase strap around his neck, his forehead bruised by falling in death against a steam-pipe. Washed, his hair combed, the hair more brown than gold, he lay on his deathbed; his face had stiffened, he wore an expression of cold and distant severity. "One would think him a young soldier who died alone," I thought, "after having been bitterly defeated." Thirty years old, at the height of his fame, married eight times. . . . He was our greatest lyric poet, the poet of the Russian campaigns, of the Moscow cafes, of

Bohemian singing during the revolution. He has sung the victory of the steel horse over the russet colt in the "fields without light." His verses are filled with dazzling images, yet they are as simple as village talk. He considered his own plunge into the abyss: "Where has your rashness led me, oh my head?" "I have been dishonourable, I have been wicked—but only to burn more brilliantly. . . ."

He had tried to put himself in tune with the times—and with our regimented literature. *I am a stranger in my own country . . . My poetry is no longer needed, and I myself am in the way . . . Blossom, oh youth, with your sound bodies . . . Your life is different, your songs are different . . . I am not a new man, I have one foot in the past—and yet, although I stagger, although I limp, I would join the cohorts of steel once again. . . .*

That's it, the unbending harshness,
The whole tale of men's sufferings!
The sickle cuts the heavy ears of grain
As one cuts the throat of a swan.

Vladimir Mayakovsky, second in popularity only to Yessenin, addressed a reproachful goodby to him:

Now you have passed away, as we say, to the other world. . . .
The void. . . . You whirl round and round, jostling the stars. . . .

Mayakovsky, athletic, clothed in a kind of jeering violence, hammered out his goodby before an audience for whom this death had become symbolic:

This globe is not too well equipped for happiness.
We must try to seize happiness at some future time!

And Mayakovsky is soon to kill himself, with a bullet in his heart; but that is another story. Through the snowy night, we carry the body of Serge Yessenin. This is no time for dreams or lyrics. Farewell, poet!

Lenka Panteleyev, a Kronstadt sailor in 1917, one of those who battered down the gates of the Winter Palace with the butt of his gun, has just ended his career in Leningrad. A legend grew up about him in the swamps where legends grow, for we have swamps again. When money came back into use, Lenka felt his end near at hand. He was not a man of ideas, he was an equalitarian. He turned bandit to plunder the first jewellery shops opened by the first neo-capitalists of the Nep. A day or two before, the militiamen who told me this tale and who admired Lenka, had surrounded him in his hide-out (he had been betrayed, of course). There were women and drink. He came in, threw down his leather jacket, tossed off a glass of vodka, took up his guitar. What should he sing? "Roll under the axe, head of Stenka Razin . . . " They struck him down while he was still singing. This dangerous guitar was silenced. The militiamen, who got forty roubles a month, wore on their caps the red star which the Panteleyevs had put there.

The sordid taint of money could again be seen on everything. The ostentatious shop-windows of the grocery stores were filled with fruits from the Crimea and wines from Georgia, but a postman earned fifty rubles a month. There were 150,000 unemployed in Leningrad alone; the allowance they received ranged from twenty to twenty-seven rubles a month, Agricultural day-workers and servants received fifteen rubles (with meals, it is true). Party functionaries got as much as 180 to 225 rubles a month, like

skilled workers. There were many beggars, and abandoned children; many prostitutes. We had three casinos in the city, where baccarat, roulette, and chemin-de-fer were played; low dives, the scenes of many crimes. The hotels which were run for foreigners and high functionaries had bars in which there were tables with soiled white linen, dusty palms, and assiduous waiters who knew secrets unknown to the revolution. What will you have? Some dope? Thirty girls, painted and bejewelled, lounge about the Europa bar, with men in fur coats and caps drinking from brimming glasses, of whom one-third are thieves, another third swindlers, and the last third melancholy workers and comrades who, by three o'clock in the morning have begun to quarrel with each other, and sometimes draw their knives. Then someone cries out with a strange pride (I heard it only the other night), "I have been a party member since 1917!" The year when the world shook. On snowy nights, sleighs drawn by proud thoroughbreds and driven by coachmen as bearded as those of the night-owls of czarist days draw up there before dawn. And a director of a nationalized factory, a wholesaler of textiles from the Lenin factory, an assassin sought after by the informers who drink with him—all these take with them, squeezed tightly together on the narrow seats, daughters of Ryazan and of the Volga, daughters of famine and revolution, who have only their youth to sell and are too thirsty for life to be among those on the suicide list which I check over in my editorial office. Leningrad lived at the price of ten to fifteen suicides a week, chiefly young people under thirty.

One could take the elevator and find on the roof of the Hotel Europa another bar, just like those in Paris or Berlin, brightly lit, with dancing and jazz, and even more dismal than the one on the street level. I was there with another writer at the beginning of a party, while the hall was still deserted, when Mayakovsky strode in with his athletic gait. He leaned on his elbow near us. "Are things all right? Yes, I suppose they're all right! *Merde!*—Do you think I'm a hypocrite? No. But some day I'll blow my brains out. Everybody's a swine!" This was several years before his suicide. He was earning a great deal of money writing official poetry for the press, still very powerful poetry at times.

We wanted to remain a party of poor people, but money very gradually became most important. Money rots everything—and yet it also makes life spring forth everywhere. In less than five years, freedom of trade has accomplished miracles. There is no more starvation; an extraordinary zest for life rises up about us, carrying us along, but the worst of it is we feel we are rapidly being swept down hill. Our country is a great convalescent body, but on this body whose flesh is our flesh we see the blotches spreading.

When I was president of a co-operative apartment-house, I supported some girl student in a long-drawn-out struggle to acquire a maid's room in this "bourgeoisified" house. The house accounts submitted to me by an engineer had been falsified, but I had to sign them anyway. One of our fellow-tenants was becoming rich quite openly by reselling at high prices goods which a socialist factory sold him cheap because of his small salary. The explanation: the demand for manufactured articles exceeded the supply by about 400 million rubles. The workers escaped their miserable quarters by going to the cabarets. Housewives in the Red Putilov Works section

begged the party committees to find a way to turn over to them a part of the salaries of their drunkard husbands. . . . On pay-days, some proletarians lay dead-drunk on the sidewalks, and others reviled you as you passed. I was despised as a bespectacled intellectual. A children's aid committee owned and ran the Vladimirsky Club, a vicious gambling-den. It was there that I saw a woman struck in the face and thrown down the stairs half dressed. The manager came over to me, and said calmly, "What makes you so indignant? She is only a street-walker. You ought to have my job!" This manager was a Communist, we were in the same party.

Trade produces a certain liveliness, but it is the most polluted kind of trade imaginable. Retail trade, the distribution of manufactured articles, has passed into the hands of private enterprise which has defeated both the co-operatives and the state-controlled trade. Where does this capital come from, which did not exist five years ago? From robbery, fraudulent speculation, and the most ingenious "combinations." Some cheap peddlers start a false co-operative; they bribe functionaries to give them credit, raw material, and orders. They had nothing yesterday, but now the Socialist state has supplied them with everything (under certain burdensome conditions), because contracts, agreements, and the granting of orders are all perverted by corruption. Once started, they go on trying everywhere to make themselves the middle-men between socialized industry and consumer. They double prices. Soviet trade, due to our industrial weakness, has now become the field of activity for a flock of vultures, in whom one can see the makings of the toughest and shrewdest capitalists of tomorrow. In this respect, the Nep is unquestionably a defeat. The prosecutors, from Krylenko down, spend their time vainly bringing speculators to trial. A shabby little fellow, with a ruddy face, very talkative, called Plyatsky, is in Leningrad in the middle of all this corruption and speculation. This businessman out of Balzac is behind a long string of enterprises, has bribed functionaries in all the bureaus; and he is not shot, because he is really needed, he keeps the wheels turning. The Nep has become a racket. This is also true in the rural districts, although it is somewhat different there. One year's sheep-breeding in the south has produced Soviet millionaires of a strange kind, former Red Partisans, whose daughters live in the most beautiful hotels in the Crimea and whose sons gamble for large stakes at the casinos.

In another field, the huge fees paid to authors encourage the slow growth of an official literature. The hack playwrights Shchegolev (the historian) and Alexei Tolstoy have amassed hundreds of thousands of rubles for some silly plays about Rasputin and the Empress; and the goal of many of our young writers is to imitate them. All they have to do is to write to the public's taste and at the same time follow the directives of the cultural section of the Central Committee. Not that this is so easy. It is becoming obvious that we are going to have a conformist and corrupt literature in spite of the remarkable resistance of the majority of young Soviet writers. . . . Although we are starting life anew, we can see everywhere things which have escaped us, which threaten us, which will be our ruin.

Konstantinov solved the equation. We knew each other without ever having met. I detested him, but I was beginning to understand him. Someone said to me, "He is scholarly and collects autographs. He has manuscripts

of Tolstoy, Andreyev, Chekhov, Rozanov. . . . He is a materialist, but he has begun to visit mystics. Perhaps a little cracked, but intelligent. A former Chekist. He says he likes you very much. . . ." In a house located on the right bank, I met some people standing about under a chandelier. One old man told us about Rozanov, in whom there was something of Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Freud, all sublimated in a sensual Christianity rebelling against itself. A kind of saint, although a prey to *idées fixes,* he had thoroughly studied the moral and the sexual problems. A bit of a scoundrel through thinking himself one—not that he wanted to be one, but he told himself that basically everyone is, in spite of everything. Author of "Fallen Leaves," a book of meditations on life, death, hypocrisy, unclean flesh, and the Saviour; a book written on sheets of toilet paper in the w.c. . . . He died about the same time as Lenin, and left a deep impression on the Russian intelligentsia. They spoke of him as though he had just left the apartment. There were some young women there, and a tall lean man with a small, blond moustache and a colourless, expressionless face, whom I immediately recognized as Ott, the director of the administrative services of the Cheka in 1919-20. An Esthonian or Lett, and characterized by a bloodless immobility, he was the one who handled all the scribbling during the period of the executions. Konstantinov, bald-headed, with a bony nose, eyeglasses; I did not remember him, although he treated me as an old acquaintance. Late in the evening he told me privately, "You know me all the same. I was the examining magistrate in the Bayrach affair. . . ."

I remembered him. In 1920, along with a French Communist, I had waged a long struggle against him to save some men who were surely innocent but whom he seemed to want shot at any cost. I shall not go into this unimportant matter. There had been the incident of the bloody shirt which had been brought to me from prison, the incident of the young woman with the face of an odalisque for whom the sadistic judge had set fantastic traps and to whom he had made certain insulting proposals; there had been many incidents, and we had finally saved the accused by going to the very top man in the Cheka, Xenofontov, I believe. At the Cheka in Petrograd, the comrades had spoken to me about the examining magistrate in equivocal terms. A hard man, incorruptible (he only pretended to be willing to sell his mercy), a sadist perhaps, "but you understand—it is psychology!" I avoided meeting him again, believing he was a dangerous person, a professional maniac. Seven years later, he offered me tea as if we were friends.

"Your protégés went to Constantinople, where they have doubtless become big speculators. You were very wrong to take so much trouble to keep me from liquidating them. I knew that strictly speaking they were innocent, but we had many other things against them. Well, it doesn't matter now. In other circumstances, even greater people than you could not prevent me from carrying out my revolutionary duty. . . . It was I who . . ."

In January, 1920, when Lenin and Dzerzhinsky were proclaiming the abolishment of the death penalty, Konstantinov was one of those Chekists who ordered a night execution at the very moment that the decree was being printed. Several hundred suspects were massacred.

"Ah, it was you who . . ." And now?

He was on the periphery of the party now, not completely excluded, but

pensioned, tolerated. From time to time he would take the train to Moscow and go to the Central Committee, where an important secretary would receive him. Konstantinov would carry his secret dossier, bulging with choice bits of information, and supplemented by his memory, whose accusations were irrefutable. He would show proofs, make accusations, name high personages, yet, never dared to tell everything. He would have been killed. Now he proposed to tell me nearly all. Whence this confidence in me? "You are an oppositionist? You are missing the whole point of the matter. You don't even suspect anything. . . ." He began by making some allusions, and we spoke of what was happening. Of what Lenin had foreseen when he said, "You think you are running the machine but it is running you, and suddenly there are other hands at the wheel."

Figures on unemployment, wage-scales; seizure of the home market by private businessmen resulting from plunder of the state; privation in the villages and the creation of a peasant bourgeoisie; weakness of the Comintern and the Rapallo policies; wretchedness in the cities and the arrogance of the newly rich—do these results seem natural to you? "And have we done all that we have done, just for this?"

He put his cards on the table and told me his secret. The secret that we have all been betrayed. There was treachery in the Central Committee while Lenin was still alive. He knew names, he had proofs. He could not tell me all, it was too serious a matter; they knew that he knew. If anyone should suspect that I learned it from him I should be lost. It is tremendous and appalling. To combat this plot, one must have a profound perception, an inquisitorial genius, and absolute discretion. At the risk of his life, he had submitted to the Central Committee his analysis of the great crime which he had studied for years. He whispered the names of foreigners, of the most powerful capitalists, and of many others to which he attached some occult significance. He mentioned a city in America. I followed his argument with the blank uneasiness which one might feel in the presence of a logical lunatic. And I saw that he had the inspired look of a madman. But in what he said there was the germ of a basic idea, and it was not the idea of a madman: "We did not fight the revolution for this."

We left each other bound by a feeling of mutual confidence. It was a white night. The street cars had stopped running, and Ott and I walked away together. Crossing a bridge which stood between the dull sky and the mist-coloured water, I realised that my companion had not changed in six years. He still wore the long cavalry coat without insignia; he had the same phlegmatic air and the same half-smile under his pale little moustache as if he were leaving the Cheka building on a white night in 1920. He was in entire agreement with Konstantinov. The argument was sound, wasn't it? We hold the threads of this plot against the first socialist republic, this monstrous plot with world-wide ramifications. . . . But everything can be saved, if only. . . . There are still some men in the Central Committee. But who are they?

The quiet city at two o'clock in the morning opened its long empty vistas. It seemed indifferent; a cold design in stone, full of memories. We had passed the blue cupola of the Mosque. On the little hill on the

right, the five heroes of the Decembrist plot were hanged in 1825. On the left, in that little palace which once belonged to one of Nicholas II's favourites, the Bolshevik plot was organized in 1917. The gilded spire of the Peter-Paul fortress appeared above the casemates and the river; a prisoner there, Nechayev dreamed his grandiose plot to overthrow the empire. The conspirators of the "People's Will" group died there—died of starvation, in 1881-83. (Many of their younger disciples survived, the link between the older group and our own.) We approached the tombs on the Field of Mars, enclosed by ramparts of red granite. Our tombs. Opposite, in St. Michael's Palace, Paul I had been assassinated by his own officers. "Just one conspiracy after another," said Ott, smiling. "But that was all child's play. To-day . . . " I had a notion to reply (but it would have been useless with these victims of an obsession): "Nowadays it is not nearly so easy. It is another thing altogether. And the conspiracies which you are inventing, my poor Ott, are quite superfluous. . . . "

I sketch these portraits and recall these chance remarks of the year 1926 because they show that even then there were vague beginnings of an atmosphere of psychosis. The whole U.S.S.R., for many tragic years, was to suffer from this psychosis more and more intensely; it is a psychological phenomenon unique in history. (Konstantinov was deported to Central Siberia in the early thirties, and disappeared.)

Then the dramatic story of Chubarev Lane disturbed the calm of the workers' city of Leningrad by revealing the conditions under which some of our young people lived. About fifteen young workers of the San-Galli factory had raped a poor girl of their own age in an empty lot close to the October Station. This was the Ligovka section, a squalid slum of filthy tenements. The Control Commission of the party, overloaded with nasty little matters of morality, were confronted with a kind of epidemic of collective rapes. Doubtless, sexuality, long repressed by revolutionary asceticism and then by poverty and famine, was beginning to recover its insistence in a society suddenly deprived of spirituality. Two affairs of the same kind became the subject of an inquiry. They took place at the House of Students in Zhelyabova Street, the former Hotel Medved, a few doors from where I was living. During the same evening, two parties in different rooms had ended by a young girl being left to the mercies of several drunken young males. . . . I visited this house with a Sanitary Commission. The rooms, nearly bare of furniture, were horribly poverty-stricken. Clothes hung from the window latches. Some pots and little tin wash-basins stood on the floor, and books were flung in the corners along with shabby, down-at-heel shoes. On the iron beds, generally without mattresses, boards had been placed, and a quilt placed on these to be used as a mattress. Wherever there were sheets, they were gray with dirt. In a large room where there was nothing but a quilt on the plain boards we found three young people asleep, two boys with a girl between them. Promiscuity was growing under these conditions of miserable squalor. Books like those of Alexandra Kollontay were promulgating an absurdly simple theory of free love; a childish materialism was reducing the "sexual need" to its fundamental of carnal desire. "We have intercourse for the same reason that we drink a glass of water, to slake our thirst." The more advanced young people, in the universities, followed

Enschmen's theory, disputed by Bukharin, on the disappearance of morals in the future communist society . . .

A trial for propaganda purposes of the fifteen culprits of Chubarev Lane took place under the portrait of Lenin in the Workers' Club. Rafail, editor of the Leningrad *Pravda,* presided, a bald, crafty-looking functionary. He did not seem to understand at any time what depths of human wickedness and poverty-induced decay he was being compelled to plumb in the name of workers' justice. A room filled with men and women workers followed the testimony in an atmosphere of weary endurance. The fifteen accused looked like guttersnipes, and combined the more brutal elements of both the proletarian and peasant types. They confessed freely, and also informed on the others, gladly giving details, understanding nothing when anything but facts were mentioned, and finding that enough fuss was made over things as they were already without inventing stories. What is more natural than sex in the desert wastes? And if she prefers to sleep with four or five or six? She would become just as pregnant and diseased if she had slept with only one. And if she refuses, perhaps it is because she has "prejudices." I still remember some bits of testimony. The lack of self-consciousness of the culprits seemed so primitive that Rafail, accustomed to committees, was continually disconcerted by it. He had just made some senseless remarks about the new culture and good Soviet morals. A small blonde lad with a short, flat nose answered him:

"I don't know what they are."

Rafail went on, "I suppose you'd prefer the bourgeois morals of the foreigners?"

It was absurdly stupid. The boy replied, "I don't know anything about them. I've never been abroad."

"You might know about them by reading foreign newspapers."

The accused answered, "I've never even seen the Soviet papers. I get my culture from the streets."

Five of the accused were condemned to death. In order to be able to execute them, the authorities had to twist the law, and they were accused of being bandits. On the evening of the verdict, I saw a purple glow in the sky over the city. I walked towards this light, and saw that the whole San-Galli works were in flames. The condemned were executed the following day. Rumor had it that the workers who had started the fire were secretly executed, but this was impossible to verify.

I decided to get to know our social inferno which flared up so brightly at night. I went down into the Soviet night shelters. I was there when some girls were shipped out by administrative decree to the concentration camps of the far north. I can safely say that Dostoyevsky saw very little, or at least, nothing has been improved in certain dark recesses of the world since Dostoyevsky's day. *Frères clochards de Paris,* how difficult is social transformation!

(*Translated by Ethel Libson*)

Louis Adeane

Four Poems for April

(1)

Now by this lake, this fallen thunderstorm,
Her gold-struck hair is beaten with the grass;
Her limbs lie slackly in the darkening soil,
Grief sifts its pallor on her doom-stained face.

My terrible kindness coiled within her will
Still saps her anger with a soothing tongue;
The startling cloud of love, unbearable,
Descends dispersed to silt the struggling wing.

My merciless anima, impending death,
I see your world behind to-day's caress,
The strangled kitten in the innocent hands,
The dreaming horror and maternal kiss,

And through your candled future I can tell
Our fear-filled present opening like a fan,
The dazzling eyelid tempted into fire,
The transient shadow and the twist of pain.

Yet poise again your love, my beautiful,
Raise quick the innocent child, the smiling flesh,
Lift your white anger and your whip-red mouth
And send your mercy like a lightning flash.

(2)

Rise from the waves, my rivering one
Curving your slenderness cold and gold
Glimmering on the rocks, or by the sands
Finger the water's wavering line.

There where you ride on clarity
Playing all day with coins of foam
I should beware your buoyancy

Seeing at last that you have come
Out of a whirlpool's fluency
Siren curling a shell of home

Rose as my love's delivering womb,
Knowing the tenderness which I hold
Murmuring always mocks, and in my hands
Lingers the warning bell of doom.

(3)

Through your grey eyes evasive heaven
Vistas at last the certain happiness
And across skies the sunrise of my vision
Spaces your hair in strands of gold and rose;
Your fountain body melts, the hills of distance
Shimmer to clouds through your transparent pose.

Landscape my lovely dream of hawthorn
Pausing with blossom by the trembling lake
Where the swan glides and poising children
Watch to-day's smiling image shake
Like unaccountable tears, stay still and valley
Always the curving vase that time could break.

Stay still, my butterfly screen transposing
Thinly the mountains of my view
With delicate wings the webs of crystal,
Veins of your rising love, the crimson dew;
Stay still, my quivering dream, remember
Landscape and future both are you.

(4)

Gone, my white tangible angel falling
Over the edge of the world into the south,
Daring like emigrant bird the terrible journey,
The swelling exultant exhausted breasts, the
Smiling and bleeding mouth.

Blown with the dust and desires in your revelling
Tangled unsleeping untouchable hair,
Travelling under the serpent and over the reaching
Forests of epiphytes flowering, leaping,
Avid with arching fire,

Torn, my immaculate angel your tactile
White and gold covering down to the blood
Beating like suns through your beauty, the quivering
Flushing flesh parting, the blood-circles spinning
Staining your curve to red.

Born through the eyes of the stars is your daring
Over and over star dwindling to earth,
World upon world opens cold as their gazing
Dawn glitters with night the bright light of their dazzling,
Dazing your life with death.

Thrown between moving rocks, the impacting
Merciless icebergs sliding to kill,
The blizzard blurring to snow and the soft deluding
South enfolding your wings, accepting your
Spent and pitiful will,

Stone, my intractable strangled angel,
The painted girl in the ice,
Flashing your jewels of tears and swaying
Down in the glacier, silent, gliding,
Frozen for bravery, beautiful.

Alex Comfort

October, 1944

The war is not over, but we can see the end of it. Millions of citizens everywhere are looking for a reprieve. Many of them will get it. Secret diplomacy is concocting the peace—we shall subscribe to it and be put back in our boxes. Intelligent people debate whether we shall occupy Germany for five, fifty or five hundred years. The intellectuals of the Allies seem to have been so far taken in by their own propaganda that they look at Germans shyly and are half relieved to find that they have no tails or horns. The most fantastic aspect about the impending peace will be the speed with which the nonsense which it is a moral duty to believe in wartime will be forgotten: its consequences, the material commitments undertaken under the influence of the same nonsense, will not be so easy to escape. Few people can remember what a good thick newspaper feels like. I saw a few days ago the *Times*, of September 1st 1939, where the great blank squares of the crossword puzzle looked antique and ridiculous. Few people can remember what it was like to be sane, to live in a world where one could not earn a decoration for butchering a few thousand civilians, where a good many national heroes would have qualified for the gallows and the mental hospital and where a single news bulletin of the present time would have produced nation-wide nausea and vomiting.

The commitments have been undertaken secretly, but even if they had been publicly discussed, what sort of frame of mind are we in to endorse them? In five years they will look like the cheques which one signed when one was drunk. The operatic bellowing and the Siegfried attitudes cannot survive the criticism of sobriety, but they are going to determine the militarisation and death of ourselves and our children. Everyone knows that, under this froth of drivel and bombast. People try halfheartedly to prolong the suspension of thought—to name towns after the scenes of enemy atrocities, to keep bloodstains permanent. We know perfectly well what is coming, and we dread the end of the paroxysm more than the paroxysm itself, because we dread the restitution of our sense of shame. Even the

sanest and most objective novelists are afraid to think how their work will read in five years. The German people, emerging from an even longer nightmare than our own, will try even harder than we to continue to embrace it. We and they will want more liquor, more morphia, and we shall not be able to get it. The dignified crusades for New Orders and World Liberation will not be able to remain topics for sane discussion—we shall see the bloody, purposeless delirium as we see those brilliant ideas that occur to us in dreams, as amazing, terrifying irrationalities. Unlike dreams they have left their physical effects.

It has been fashionable to stress the uniqueness of the war. The uniqueness of every war is stressed, as a means of inducing the combatant peoples to swallow it, and the present war shows the political phases which have characterised all such adventures since radical ideas compelled military leaders to procure a measure of public support. There is the phase of preliminary salesmanship, in which the necessary sceneshifting is undertaken. There is the phase of commitment ("no retreat is possible") and there is the phase of undisguised deterioration based on hatred, which conflict has provided with much material, and which, in the present instance, was liberally helped out with atrocity propaganda. That first phase of reconciliation, of creating an atmosphere of noblesse oblige, a mental offensive which is almost always directed against the intellectuals for choice, was ridiculously easy in 1939. It was the intellectuals themselves who had stressed the brutality of Fascism, had published its misdeeds when the Government was actively engaged in concealing them, who had voluntarily gone to fight against it in Spain. The task of a government that wishes to make war is to abolish the sense of personal responsibility among its subjects. It was possible in 1939 to depict a European war as a responsible course of action. It was possible to appeal to every section of the community, from the least to the most intelligent, in varying degrees of truth or falsehood. Atrocity propaganda was needless. The atrocities had been voluntarily reported in spite of every official effort to suppress them.

A very substantial burden of responsibility rests on these intellectuals. They continued to repeat their belief in a war against Fascism in the face of every evidential consideration which could possibly be presented to them. They have the record of the allied Governments in the matter of China, India, Spain, Germany, Japan. They have the successive utterances of all the war leaders. It is not as if they do not know their men—they have had ample opportunity of watching these anti-fascists at work in condoning fascism at every possible or profitable opportunity. Yet for five years they have supported actions more and more irresponsible, closer and closer to those which, in Spain, brought them out to fight. They have repeated with the pertinacity of Gadarene swine that this was a war against fascism, and that if it were not they would make it one. If Al Capone and Charles Peace, making no secret of their record, were to come and demand their savings for hospital Sunday, would they subscribe? Evidently they would, in the hope that this time they might be sincere. They have sacrificed their lives, their art, and their ideas to the Antifascist War, they have acted on the highest international motives, but they have as surely sacrificed their responsible attitude to humanity by cheering Hamburg and Harris as they

would have done by cheering Himmler and Lidice. They have utterly failed to learn the lesson of war,

This war has not been unique. Its lesson is identical with the lesson of every previous war. The record of it is the record of the incredible, somnambulant heroism of the peoples of both sides, and the bestiality, corruption and idiocy of their governments. The outcome of it has been the same outcome as in every previous war—the peoples have lost it. Every sacrifice made in it is futile, every citation of the enemy's brutality is made to justify the adoption of similar brutality. No matter what external semblance of justice a war may bear in its first days, these conclusions are the ineluctable result of the abandonment of personal responsibility. One is tempted to say—"Learn them—remember them—you will need to know them again, as they are your only footrule." It will be a new just cause next time and when they begin to say "look, injustice" you must reply "whom do you want me to kill?"

Yet the war has been unique in one respect. It has shown as never before that Society is the enemy of man—not one society, capitalist or socialist, but all society, and that in peace as in war the only final safeguard of freedom is the willingness of the individual to disobey. Fascism may or may not have been destroyed, but it is becoming abundantly clear that the partisan in peace will have the same rôle as the partisan in war. Society is rooted to-day in obedience, conformity, conscription, and the stage has been reached at which, in order to live, you have to be an enemy of society. The giant enemy of the next ten years will not be a class but society. The choice is not between socialism and fascism but between life and obedience. Every atrocity of the war was the direct consequence of somebody obeying when he should have thought. We have to learn the lesson of resistance, evasion, disappearance, which the occupation taught the people of France. Our own government, if it wants to make butchers or bomber pilots of our children, is as much our enemy as the Germans ever were. We have to unlearn what we have been taught—it may be dodging the column, but if the column is going to Lidice *via* Hamburg, then we do better in dodging it than obeying. The Churchills and Hitlers of this world are the essential products of the State in the total divorce between their pretention and their action, and their own utter unability to comprehend the mature quality and results of their action.

Yes, everyone who has mitigated and excused, in this war, English, French, or German, has something to answer for. The most offensive figure of the period has been the professional sycophant; not the *Sunday Express* yellowbelly, but the poet or the dramatist recruited as a salesman to his fellow intellectuals, a merchant of a better class of goods than the gutter press, dealing in reticent atrocities coupled with sensible doubts about the cruder falsehoods, dealing in applause at the air massacre, coupled with a little peroration about military necessity; peddling the sort of apologetic patriotism that does not insult the intelligence nor affect the conscience. And the rest, the unhired intellectuals, the editors and critics—where have they been? *Horizon* is full of gratitude that through four years of war not one word has been censored. Who the mischief wants to censor it? Has it not believed in the Great Antifascist War and the graven image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up? It has busily maintained intellectual

morale and quieted the intellectual conscience, and its service to the war has been very nearly equal to its service to literature. Everyone enjoys freedom provided they do not use it responsibly. Even Koestler, the finest novelist in this country at the moment, has to dress his atrocity stories up as psychoanalytical dreams, so as to leave an escape route if they turn out to be untrue. I am not doubting Koestler's integrity and talent. If anyone knows what Fascists and others can do to their political opponents, he does. But he typifies the dilemma of the anti-fascist intellectual, kept as a tame animal by a war government whether he likes it or not. It is not that what they have believed is rendered retrospectively untrue—it is that they know, inwardly, that they must either deny what they fought for, or lend colour to a palpable swindle. They have been unable to take the final step into objectivity—"it is not fascism or communism that makes atrocities, but society." An atrocity is no more than a grossly irresponsible action, the sort of action which one performs out of allegiance to an acephalous cause. So the sycophant grows fat, and the honest anti-fascist passes through varying degrees of mental agony. If I say that it would have been better to have lost the war, and learned thereby to be enemies of society, then to have won it and to be integrated, gleichgeschaltet, those who have been through this agony will understand me. We know that murder is real, atrocities are real, because we have committed them. We know that war is unforgiveable because we have forgiven it. In the battle for responsible action we have learned that only the single, isolated, unarmed partisan, relying on his wits, is able to act responsibly, and if Society catches up with him, that is good-night—he catches a bullet or a B.B.C. post, as if he had caught smallpox—the army of decent individuals, the somnambulists of freedom, lose a fighter and close up the gap. It is not only the fascists who destroy people. Society is a machine for doing that very thing.

When the ordinary man acquiesces in war, he does so because he has been persuaded that he is defending himself—and in doing so he fails to recognize the urgent need to defend his home, his person and his family against his own government. It is difficult to see what worse impositions the "enemy" could make than those which are made by his self-styled and self-appointed defenders—to separate him forcibly and for years from his family, compel his wife to work in heavy industry for the commercial profit of its proprietors, remove his children or permit them to grow up as illiterate savages, employ him in interminable foreign campaigns where he will have the opportunity of encountering every physical and mental torment, or in interventionist adventures against the workers of other countries, and return him home, if he is fortunate, to an old wife and children he has never seen, privileged to inhabit some sort of shack, if he can afford it. "But the enemy would torture or imprison him . . ." Conceptions of torture vary. They would not torture him if he obeyed them, and what would his own government do if he were to disobey? "He will be fighting for his children's freedom. . . ." To go through the same bloody swindle in twenty years? To rot for people so nugatory that they mistake an operatic attitude like Unconditional Surrender for a policy, so fatuous even in their own dirty work that every speech they make is a direct encouragement to the enemy to go on fighting, moral and intellectual eunuchs who cannot even recognise the lies they tell for their own ends? When a government intends war, then

the attitude of the ordinary man who lives in its jurisdiction must be the same as it would be towards a foreign invader. Both are his enemies.

The Maquis of the war may allow themselves to be reabsorbed into the structure of citizenship. We will be the Maquis of the peace. They have shown us that it can be done—that we can keep the shell of society while devouring its heart and undermining its tyranny. Our only weapon is responsibility. Murder and sabotage are not responsible weapons—they are the actions of desperate men or imbeciles. We are desperate men but not imbeciles. We do not refuse to drive on the left hand side of the road, or to subscribe to national health insurance. The sphere of our disobedience is limited to the sphere in which society exceeds its powers and its usefulness. The chief of these excesses, the most impertinent and insupportable, is conscription. It is also the easiest to defy. I believe that in the interval of exhaustion which elapses between this war and the next we can so undermine that calf-like obedience which made possible 1914 and 1939 that when next the irresponsibles try to make it bear their weight, it will precipitate them into the filth where they deserve to be. Everyone who attempts to make war, or to make the peoples acquiesce in war, is as much our enemy as the Germans. We must remember that, and direct ourselves accordingly. Up till now, it has been an article of pride among English politicians that the public would shove its head into any old noose they might show it—unflinching steadfast patriotism, unshakeable morale—obedience and an absence of direct action. When enough people respond to the invitation to die, not with a salute but a smack in the mouth, and the mention of war empties the factories and fills the streets, we may be able to talk about freedom. I do not expect or hope for this. I only know what I myself am going to do. The people learn slowly, and learn incompletely. They remain somnambulists, but the pressure of the times moves them. They will be loudly congratulated after the Peace, and quietly diddled after that. But they are learning the lessons of the war, not unique lessons, but as old as humanity, the lessons of responsibility and disobedience.

Peter Wells

The Tulip in a Pot

From the Diary of an Impossible Person.

Here I am lodged in a new room. I suspect that there may be beetles and mice. The chairs are covered with melon coloured leatherette that has been rubbed and soiled by the dirty elbows of lodgers who have been here before me. I see them all—thickset, greasy men, taking off their heavy boots and laughing coarsely: their folds of flesh rippling under tight waistcoats. I have found a paper cigarette packet behind the torn screen in the fireplace: so I know what kind of men these were—flicking cheap cigarettes between their cracked, tobacco stained fingers and sliding their eyes sideways through the blue curtained windows at the girl with a parcel who minces past on the pavement. In my mattress is a large hollow where

one of them has lain sodden with sleep the night through: the air reeks with the sound of his breathing: his wet moustaches droop on the frayed pillow . . . But these fancyings will explain nothing when it is my principal intention to relate the series of events that led to my coming here: for though I still have discovered neither parasites nor vermin (and I gaze perpetually at the yellow wainscoting), yet am I not at all decided . . . shall I remain? I look at the bent nail rusting on the windowledge, and repeat the question. I hear it echo in my mind.

It is like this. Until a week ago I had been living with friends of mine—very old friends, between whom and myself were many bonds of mutual interest and understanding. Very dear friends, I was about to say: but that was at the beginning of my story: time rots, like the water rotting a dirt cloth: I have in my hands now the rags of a once close friendship, the *rags,* I say—do you understand that? My friend's wife was a dark little French girl, who had been brought up in Paris, in the suburbs, on the dregs of cinemas, and who had had a 'flitting' education, as it were—like a butterfly's, alighting neither here nor there. Her adolescence was spent with picture magazines. I had a room at the back of their flat. Next to it was the tiny kitchen. The window was always grimy, and looked down onto the backyard and slanting outhouses, and the roofs of the houses in the opposite street. Here Adele, for that was her name, was always cooking just before dusk: the steam rising from the boiling saucepans, the odour of greens, the hiss of the gas and the patterns of moisture forming on the window—these are vivid impressions in my mind, for they show me again Adele hovering quietly there, her hair falling in a fringe over her small forehead—Adele entranced, dreamily watching the grey window as the dusk swims into the air, dreaming of her girlhood in Paris. She lived in her past. She fluttered over the surface of her life in that flat. You could see the past mattered most to her—I could see it: though I did not say anything—of course, for I endeavour always to be discreet: but it was patent, to me, that she was most at home among her French books, and that the tattered yellow covers were to her like the petals of still fresh and smiling flowers. Indeed, I had only to see her with them, to think of the warm Parisian sun, and the langour of streets on dry, late afternoons.

Yet we lived happily enough—all three of us. She never discussed her past, how her father had managed a small cinema in the faubourgs, nor her life in the gaudy foyer where she had learned about the mysteries of her body from the furtive conversation of the usherettes. Until—and at this point all our troubles began. I must try and remember very precisely. The very evening I remember her in the kitchen, Stephen (that is her husband) came in a little late, threw down his torn coat on the chair and placed a pot with a tulip in it on the table.

Now I must describe Stephen. He and I have very similar ideas: except that I am at liberty to enjoy mine in unlimited leisure, in an idle irresponsible manner; and that he is determined to strengthen his by living a deplorable and degrading kind of life. He works in a nursery: they grow tomatoes and flower bulbs. His hands get filthy dirty with the work. He is quite tall: already I tell him he is developing a stoop. (Of course, you

must understand me, all this took place in the past—it is finished now, quite finished). He was the son of a bank clerk: and early in childhood showed signs of a precocious intellect. At the age of ten he wore glasses. He has long, thick hair; and a very white face, inclined to plumpness, the flesh of which (no, I am not laughing) is of a lifeless pliability—of a consistence very like rubber. But his lips are full and a plum red. Having won a university scholarship, he broke with his family completely: took a degree, and then specialised in some subject or other—highly technical, which I only know took him to Paris for awhile, where he met Adele. How, of course, I do not know; and he would never say. They returned to England and married. Then the war broke out.

This brings me to where Stephen came in and put down the tulip on the table. His face was sweaty and little lines of dust had run together along the cracks of his cheeks. He was a most picturesque sight!—there was his absurd coat lying on the chair. You could see he was quite exhausted. Adele continued to slice potatoes in her nonchalant fashion, while I watched from the door.

"Don't you like it?" he said, undoing his bootlace. He put on his agonised voice—a sort of self-conscious exasperation.

"What are you talking of?" answered Adele, pouting her lips and flicking a fishlike chip into the fat that had begun to pop and sizzle.

"That tulip. I work with the darn things all day."

"The tulip . . . it is very naice." She seemed to suck the last word like a sweet lollipop. I knew she enjoyed making fun of the English. All the time, I knew that Stephen was furious. He had taken off his boot. He heaved it across the floor, like a petulant child. Then sat elbow on knee, chin on fist watching it, where it had crashed to the ground by the cupboard door.

"What do you think I work for?" he muttered.

"Papa always worked," Adele sang. And then bit her lip. I felt that she was going to cry. Imagine me—in a most embarrassing position: not knowing if to go or to remain. I stood rooted to the spot in embarrassed indecision. Stephen had begun to toss his pocket knife up and down in the air, but absent-mindedly, and I could see his eyes were fixed and staring at the floor. I coughed. I did not know what to do.

"You see. He larffs at you," said Adele, pointing to me with a fork. I could have fled. I had never guessed she knew I was standing there.

"Your seely tulip," I heard her say. But I had fled down the passage.

At supper that evening, I saw that Adele had been crying. Stephen prodded his chips viciously. I felt most upset, and could eat nothing. How I lived through those days, I can't imagine: and all the while I was aware that Adele was going to have a baby. They had not told me, day after day passed, the atmosphere grew more and more strained, and still they did not tell me. The fact was so obviously a contradiction: and yet of course I could not help but notice it. I dared say nothing. It was a most delicate situation. And all during this period, there stood the silly tulip in the window: growing bigger and bigger, fanning out its leaves to the light, and making every preparation to come into flower. Assiduously, Stephen watered it twice a week: with a kind of strained patience, that

put all our nerves on edge. I noticed on these occasions Adele was always shut away into her French books.

Yet their home was my home. I could not leave them. We had been together too long. It was obviously a problem for all three of us. But I knew not where to start: and I am so timid, I cannot bear to trespass upon anyone's feelings. I grew more and more fidgety. I could hear Stephen's cruel laugh sometimes when of an evening I sat alone in my room: and Adele's bitter scream. Then I knew that she had stamped her foot. Yet there are some things a man cannot stand. I can stand being put on edge: but I cannot stand having my sense of decency violated. Why did I go down to the nursery to see Stephen? It was a stupid place. I hated it. Perhaps I went there to spite him. I am always secretly exultant at seeing people in a degrading position. It is a foible of mine.

The manager of the nursery was alighting from his big, silver car—a mass of chromium plate, with two headlamps ridiculously prominent, like alert mouse's ears on the front. The sun shone on the man's greasy bald head. He smoked a large cigar and glanced at me disdainfully as I stood in the roadway. I felt like a worm: I was crushed. I cleared my throat and asked where I might find Stephen. He looked me up and down—a rather surprised look, I thought. He waved his cigar in the air, and disappeared into a shed: leaving me as if drowned under a shower of unspoken words. I almost turned up my coat collar. The sun was jumping about on the glass: there were broken flowerpots everywhere, like stranded corals. Bent old men in greasy jackets were pushing wheelbarrows up and down a cinder track. When I approached one of them, he did not look at me, but I had the impression he was laughing into his collar. I remember he had white, very bushy eyebrows. His smooth face was stretched into a kind of supercilious grin. I was hesitating, not knowing whether to speak, feeling most conscious of the coloured pattern on my socks, when I suddenly saw Stephen, black from head to foot, so it seemed, shovelling coal dust in a brick pit that stood beside one of the greenhouses, underneath a bent tin roof. His head was quite black, the whites of his eyes stood out grotesquely. The shovel clanged and scraped as it hit the ground, and specks of fine coal flew in the air. I did not go too near. I just hovered, several yards away, tiptoeing, and calling him. He looked over. I sensed a scowl, under the coal dust: though of course I couldn't properly see the expression of his face. He leaned on his shovel: and as the dust seemed to subside a bit, I moved cautiously nearer.

"Hallo," he said: his voice was a bit suspicious.

"Hallo," I said, very cheerfully. "Is it you?"

He didn't answer.

Just then, a man who was wheeling a barrow, dropped it down right in the middle of the pathway: and I saw that men had appeared by the doors of the greenhouses, and were beginning to stream down to a wooden hut at the far end of the cindertrack. A man stood there with a watch in his hand, timing them in: rather like the referee, in a race. Stephen had flung aside his shovel.

"That's bait time," he said sharply, walking at quite a speed towards the other men. Looking over his shoulder, he added: "You had better come on, if you want to see me."

It all occurred so quickly, I scarcely knew how to act: I thought for an instant there must have been an air raid warning—some private signalling device I did not understand: people seemed to have come from everywhere. I followed Stephen.

"Is is alright?" I said to him anxiously, from the rear.

"Don't talk," he snapped. "Hurry. We only get ten minutes."

Then I guessed they were all going to have their food. But I'd scarcely grasped this fact, before I was almost knocked over by something else far more unexpected. I lost my breath completely. A young land girl with flying hair and an eager face ran up beside Stephen and positively screamed:

"Oh darling: you do look marvellous." Her breasts trembled with excitement; and she seemed to leap up beside him, bounding along like a young pup.

I gasped. I could see Stephen slacken his pace, and make every attempt to appear as if the landgirl was so enthusiastic about the air just in front of his nose, and had nothing at all to do with him. Really it was a most pathetic effort. She just flapped with emotion. He was at his wits' end. He opened his mouth to speak to me and not a word came forth.

"I shan't come in," I said very coldly, when we had reached the door of the hut. I nodded to the girl, holding her at a distance with my eyes. I went back along the path feeling extremely indignant.

Here I must disclose a fact which so far I have concealed—partly because I have felt ashamed, partly because it did not seem necessary to impart the information, Anyway, here it is. I am almost completely without money. I have only a pitiful little allowance from my family—not enough to live on. What else could I do but . . . but be a sponger? Was there anything else for me to do? If I lived on Stephen and Adele, do you blame me? If I borrowed money from them, and never repaid it, do you really—honestly and truly—think is was despicable? I don't. No. It was the most natural thing, for a man in my circumstances. But the trouble was that it made me so beastly dependent—without my realising it. I have suffered a great blow: and all because I am inviolably moral. I have cast myself out onto the world—penniless—in order to defend a principle. Ashamed: no, most certainly no. I have done the right thing. Now I suffer for having done the right thing. I am forced to live in degrading circumstances: in this mean, cheap boxlike room smelling of camphor, which has been elbowed and rubbed by dirty, rough men . . . in short, I could cry with anger, at the cruelty of my fate. But I have not yet told the end of my story. I am so obsessed by the depressing objects around me—the bent alarm clock, ticking loudly; the shell, like an ear, with fluff and dust in its inner crevices; the pink china ornaments, full of pins and bits of broken metal; the mirror, like a sea pitted with rocks;—I am so morbidly overwhelmed by these things, the symbols of my pathetic fate, that I scarcely know where to begin my ending. I can hear trains rumbling over a bridge; the click of trucks on a long goods train; the glow from the engine shines against the night sky. Everywhere else is quiet and deserted. The road lies like a ribbon under the faint moon. The hedges hunch their shoulders in the dark. A creaking noise comes from somewhere among the glasshouses as a slight wind stirs. I am creeping silently

along the road. My face is drawn and tense; my throat prickly with nervousness. I have on my soft shoes—the noiseless ones. The backs of my eyes ache with expectancy, with repressed indignation. It is for Adele's sake. I have at last decided how to act. As I draw near the end of the road, I pause. It is as I had thought. I hear two people whispering.

I have no flowers in my little room, where I lodge—the poor little room where I lodge.

I remember the tulip in the pot, and how it was in flower the day that I left.

A train is clanking over the bridge. While Stephen, with the landgirl in his arms, rolls about behind the hedge, and I can hear him whispering (I crane my head forward eagerly to listen):

"I gave her a tulip in a pot. A pot in the tulip: ha, ha!"

Denis Preston and Albert McCarthy

The Poetry of American Negro Folksong

(2) Worksongs

Whilst there exists a strong musical kinship between the various forms of AfroAmerican folksong, it is in the poetic content of each main group that the widest divergencies are to be found. While the body of religious song drew poetic inspiration from the source of alien biblical allegory, worksongs were expressive of the immediate reaction of the Negro to his contact with social reality. Blues, the third primary group, is in essence a musical fusion of both spiritual and worksong with added urban strains, and poetically the most personal by far of all the folk-expression of the American Negro.

Worksong, it may safely be presumed, was the first manifestation of a negroid folk form native to the American soil, preceding all others.

The elements of spontaneous expression, abstract as the dance, survived where creative art, folklore and song flagged and died. Sundered even from the environment and tradition which gave it purpose the dance in its most primitive state, rhythmic movement and posture, was an expressive channel transcending the barriers of language and custom. Whatever the external forms American Negro folk culture was to achieve the Negro's inherent rhythmic sensibility was the cornerstone, an indissoluble link with his African ancestry. A survival of one of the earliest types of Afro-American group expression is the *ring-shout,* still practiced in certain isolated parts of the South, notably rural Louisiana. "True to an age-old West African pattern, the dancers shuffle round and round in single file,

moving in a counter-clockwise direction, clapping out the beat in complex counter-rhythms."

Communal chants and tribal ceremonial songs of African origin would, on the other hand, have been remembered and practiced in unalloyed form only as long as the tribal integrity remained unbroken. The breakdown of the communal entity probably occurred no later than the slave auctions held at points of dispersal soon after disembarkation. This breaking-down, not only of the tribal unit but of the family unit too, was, in part, a calculated act by the slave-holders to mitigate the possibility of organisation and revolt by slaves of common blood.

Dispossessed by slavery of characteristic tribal tradition, there was yet a universal African heritage to provide a loose-textured cultural background. As generations of slave existence brought into being a serf-fraternity based upon a socio-economic state rather than the common interest of cultural unity, the threads of multi-tribal lore were gathered into the body of what we now designate AfroAmerican Folk Culture.

Even before the indoctrination of the Negro with Christianity, whilst the slow process of absorption into the American scene was taking place, the first primitive group-consciousness manifested itself—the rhythmic union which bonded each slave party at work upon the plantations.

The worksong at its most primitive is often little more than a compound of onomatopoeic gibberish, rhythmically intoned with major stress cast upon the climacteric action of the allotted task. For instance, in a *chopping-song* the motive-accent falls as the axes bite the wood. The vocal expression this "accent" normally adopts is a sudden discharge of breath, a violent ejection—*ha*! *or huh*!

Songs of this type might well be termed *essential* worksong, the rhythmic incantation of wordless tones poetically wedded to the sequence of muscular movement involved in a given physical task. And since the tasks allocated the unskilled Negro worker were primitive and manual such simple accompanying chants were sufficient to serve their primary function—the rhythmic identification of the group with its labour.

* * *

The prolific singer of AfroAmerican folksong Huddie Ledbetter—Lead Belly—included in his recorded set of "Negro Sinful Songs" a good example of one of the simplest forms of worksong: *Black Betty*[1]. Black Betty is the bitter nickname given by Negro convicts to the whip which was, and still is, used in some Southern prisons. The terse poetic line is broken by the interlinear interpolation of the abstract descriptive syllables *"bam-ba-lam"* with which the singer mimics the whip's sound. Immediately preceding the motive-accent this effects a cautionary line, presuming the concerted action of the axes' swing . . .

Oh, Lawd, Black Betty,
Bam-ba-lam! . . . (HA!)
Black Betty had a baby,
Bam-ba-lam! . . . (HA!)
Oh, Lawd, Black Betty,
Bam-ba-lam! . . . (HA!)
It de Cap'n's baby,
Bam-ba-lam! . . .

1 MUSICRAFT (U.S.A.) Set 31.

"de Cap'n" being the white boss of the working party.[2]

As in all of "primitive" worksong the melodic content is extremely simple, its line constricted. Only the tones of the major triad are employed, with the cautionary line firmly rooted on the tonic-note and each time uttered with like accentuation.

Where the sequence of movement in the accomplishment of the task is short the melodic structure of the accompanying song is restricted, the poetic line laconic. In common with other bodies of folkart there is a volume of duplication. The AfroAmerican folkstore is well stocked with verses, epigrams even, and turns-of-phrase which are frequently borrowed to fit a wealth of contexts. Similarly, parallel musical strains are to be discovered in a variety of songs. In one positive instance a single air serves at least five Negro songs, which range from the neo-worksong *Alabama Bound* to the sophisticated urban blues *Don't You Loudmouth Me!* . . .

The simple major strain of *Black Betty* applies also to a *hammer-song*, the abstract line, however, replaced by a direct-nominative . . .

Oh, my hammer,
Hammer ring,
Oh, my hammer,
Hammer ring,
Ringin' on de buildin',
Hammer ring,
Ringin' on de buildin',
Hammer ring . . .

Almost alone amongst worksongs hammer-songs contain immediate reference to task accompanied. Whilst many songs have verses containing oblique reference, prompted by external causes—economic or environmental, few offer such unequivocal statements-of-action as the hammer-songs. In that they are remarkable.

The sprightly tempo, the line-arrangement, the brief cautionary line, all indicate that the quoted hammer-song is accompaniment to a task engaging a lightweight tool, in contradistinction to the worksong recorded by Ledbetter—*Take This Hammer!*—where sombre cast of verse and massive motive-accent suggest a sledge-hammer task.

The development of the verse-content of worksong is generally deter-

---

2 The Trinidadian musician, LAUDERIC CATON, recently sang me a West Indian Voodoo chant in which identical syllables were a recurrent *motif*. Such coincidental similarity at once suggests a common source of origin. It is not improbable that degenerate remnants of African terminology are still in general usage throughout the Americas, and though the words in themselves may have lost direct meaning their onomatopoeic worth has endeared them to the Negro's quick sense of imagery.

A further confirmation of Afric persistence comes from the coloured Virginian singer Adelaide Hall, who admits to remembering lullabies and incantations sung by Negroes settled in the Blue Ridge Mountains where community-life, carried on remote from the mainstream of continental folk culture, retains strong elemental strains. In her own singing before 1929/30 she often employed "abstract vocalisation", a study of which throws revealing light upon the link between African and AfroAmerican vocal expression. Some of the primitive effects obtained are purely African in character—the throatal growling, the interpolated falsetto, and the use of hard and soft liquid and palatal "clicks" (an expressive device common to African song, especially in the Bantu languages, noted by A. V. Lester in his essay: "Clicking" In The Zulu Tongue—NEGRO (1934).)

The urban development of "abstract" singing by blues—and jazz-singers, generally presumed to be a literal interpretation of instrumental extempore, is clearly yet another revelation of the persistent African heritage.—D.P.

mined by the frequency and qualitative power of the motive-accent. Qualitatively, the motive-accent (however expressed) is governed by the character of the climacteric action of the task—thus it is possible to group together *pick- hoe-* and *axe-songs* wherein the tool *bites* substance; the climax is immediately followed by the excision of the tool, and the stress of the motive-accent enfolds both bite and withdrawal. In hammer-tasks there is only *contact* between tool and substance, sharp and definitive.

Appreciation of much of AfroAmerican worksong is impossible on study of the verses (monosyllabic and sometimes incoherent,) which fit the songs-of-simple-tasks. Verses, songs and singers are an indivisible whole. Allied to the task itself, the poetic circle is complete. Esthetic evaluation is therefore largely dependent upon the combination of aural *and* visual testimony. Picturisation of movement, however, is so much the *forte* of the Negro singer (and incarnate in his worksong,) that even "twice-removed" recorded worksong evokes a strong mental image of rhythmic bodily action. The cast of accentuation, the ebb and flow of the rhythmic surge, the intensification or sudden relaxation of the throatal *tremolo* constant in the negroid voice, these are the expressive factors.

★ ★ ★

AfroAmerican folklore abounds in mythological characters—the folk-heroes. Songs and tales perpetuating their fabulous achievements have long been a channel for the expression of frustrated race-pride; an element of self-identification enters into the glorification of the folk-heroes, and often enough the verses carry an air of conscious *braggadocio.* The saga of *John Henry,* giant amongst the creatures of Negro folkstore, is recounted in endless variation throughout the Southern States. He is the most widely esteemed of the folk-heroes, his exploits are a legion . . .

De man dat invented de steam drill,
Thought he was mighty fine.
John Henry drove his fifteen feet,
An' de steam drill only made nine . . .

Stewball, variously an axe- or hoe-song, is a primitive ballad which glorifies a figure whose legendary appeal is more localized. Animal symbolism (with its roots in "animal totemism") is a property of American Negro folkart—the rooster is still the symbolisation of sexual potency in many an urban blues-song.

"Skew Ball was an Irish race-horse of broadside fame. The song came over to America and was turned into a worksong by the slaves . . . And now Skew Ball has become "Stewball" and his race is sung in the prisons of Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi . . . It is the most widely known of the chain-gang songs . . . and by far the most constant as to tune and words . . ." ("American Ballads & Folk Songs"—*Lomax.*)

The following stanza illustrates the way in which this song is sung by a gang of Negro working men in the fields. The accents mark the hoe or axe blows . . .

LEADER	CHORUS
Way oút in	Unh-húnh—
Califórny	Unh-húnh—
Where ol' Stéwball	Unh-húnh—
Was bórn,	Was bórn—
All de jóckeys	Unh-húnh—

LEADER	CHORUS
In de coúntry	Unh-húnh—
Said he blów there	Unh-húnh—
In a stórm,	In a stórm—
In a stórm, man,	In a stórm—
In a stórm.	In a stórm . . .

The group-leader carries the narrative through its many changes with line-by-line response from the choir of work-gang voices. Only the key-lines are uttered by the chorus, which otherwise contents itself with strident ejaculations which bear the momentum of the motive accent. The antiphonic interplay between solo voice and choir creates an undulating swing on which the motive-accent rides easily from leader to group.

A higher stage of development in antiphonic worksong is to be discovered in *Long John,* or *Long Gone.* Here each line of verse and refrain receives choral response, somewhat in the manner of certain religious chants.

"The song is the sketch of a legendary character named Long John who outran the police, the sheriff, the deputies with all their bloodhounds and got away from jail to freedom. The song is a picture of the chase, but full of puns (about John of the Bible,) full of double-meanings and asides . . . "("Archive of American Folk Song").

The illustrative power of Negro worksong is exemplified in *Long John.* The propellent rhythmic tension mounting relentlessly as verse succeeds verse is the epitome of picturisation—Cesar Franck's dramatic *Chasseur Maudit* with all its complex musical score of brasses, woodwinds, percussion and multitudinous strings creates no better image of the chase . . .

REFRAIN

LEADER	CHORUS
He's lóng gone,	He's lóng gone,
He's lóng John,	He's lóng John,
He's góne, gone,	He's góne, gone,
Like a turkey through de córn,	Like a turkey through de córn,
Wid his long clo'es ón,	Wid his long clo'es ón,
He's gone, góne,	He's gone, góne,
He's gone Jóhn	He's gone, Jóhn,
He's long góne.	He's long góne . . .

★ ★ ★

With the songs of the railroad we come to the most complex of Negro folksong which is accompaniment to group-activity, and at once the most interesting.

In *steel-laying holler* and *tie-shuffling chant* the simple cautionary word or line gives place to a rolling monologue (the chanted directions of foreman to workgang,) prologue to the effective action. The first qualifications of a gang foreman are that he should possess a good voice, a fine sense of rhythm, and the ability to improvise.

In such a task as steel-laying the timing of the group-action is the vital consideration. Steel-laying consists of unloading rails from a flat-car and placing them in position on the ties. A regulation railroad iron weighs almost two tons, and it takes a gang of fourteen good stout men to handle it safely and easily. To keep these men working together so that none should strain himself unduly, or get in the way of the falling rail is the foreman's responsibility. Accurate group-timing is entirely dependent upon his ability to phrase his directive monologue with the sequence of the preparatory movements. There is no choral response in this type of work-

song—the nature of the group-action makes this impossible. Only at the *throwaway* does the gang give voice—to a concerted ejection of hoarse breath . . . *huh!*

True notation of these foreman's monologues is out-of-question. The tenuous line of the chant, with its microtonal inflections and subtle accentuation, use of strained half-note and *falsetto,* owes much to African vocal music. Its only Western counterpart is to be found in the attenuated and infinitely shaded arabesques of the Flamenco singers.

Awright, awright.
Ev-rybody get ready.
Come on down here, come on, boys. (The men group themselves at the end of the rail.)
Bow down. (They bend over and lay hold of the rail.)
Awright, up high. (They lift the rail to chest level.)
Awright, throw'way. (They push it away, off the car.)
Awright, le's move on down 'n' git another one.
Awright, bow down.
Awright, head high.
Throw'way . . .

And so on, until the car is emptied.

Tie-shuffling is the lining or straightening-out of a railroad track. A pretty description of this task is given in "American Ballads & Folk Songs" :

"Henry, the foreman, stooped over and squinted off down the shining rail; then stood up and bawled out directions to his gang in the impossibly technical language of the railroad. They, with heavy wooden bars on their shoulders, trotted off down the track, jammed their lining bars down under the rail on the inner side, and braced against them. One of their number, a handsome yellow man, when he was sure that they were ready to heave, threw back his head and sang. On the first and next to the last beat of every verse, each man threw his weight against the bar; the refrain was repeated until Henry, who had kept his eye to the rail meanwhile, shouted his directions about the next "johnnyhead" . . . At that signal the song was broken off, the gang stopped heaving, and the whole scene was repeated a few yards on down the track . . . "

The less exhausting, and exacting, task of *tie-tamping* (packing in gravel around the tie,) allows greater freedom in accompanying song. Some of the verses in tie-tamping chant shew clear kinship to blues, in character and form . . .

Mary got a baby, an' I know it ain' mine,
I b'lieve it is de cap'n's, 'cause he goes dere all de time . . .

There are many oblique references to social conditions . . .

You fool de cap'n, an' I fool de straw,
But de gen'l manager, he gonna fool us all . . .

whilst the "cap'n" comes in for a good amount of acrid and slighting comment . . .

Ef I'd 'a' knowed dat my cap'n was blin',
I wouldn' went to work till de clock struck half-pas' nine . . .

Working on the railroad brought the Negro into close contact with outside folk strains, and with that world of mechanical progress in whose creation and development he took only the humblest part. The airs of the whites he adapted to his own folk uses, their verses and ballads he translated into his own idiom and added to his folkstore.

The railroad became the inspiration of his finest folk ballads, and his outstanding folk-heroes: John Henry, Casey Jones, Charley Snyder, and many others.

And industrial progress gave him *Henry Ford,* a towering figure in the misty annals of AfroAmerican folklore . . .

★ ★ ★

We cannot conclude without paying tribute to the sterling work of John and Alan Lomax in collecting and annotating American Negro folksong. Their "American Ballads & Folk Songs" (*The Macmillan Company, New York*—1934) has become the standard work of reference on the subject, and most of the verses we have quoted come from that fertile source of information.

With portable recording apparatus they travelled thousands of miles through the Southern States, noting every manifestation of Negro folksong, and preserving on wax such dying arts as ring-shout and worksong. And a work of preservation indeed it was, for in 1933, when such recording became possible, worksongs were seldom sung by Negroes—except in penitentiaries . . .

"In the world outside, machines had already replaced most group hand labour—ditch-digging machines, steam shovels, donkey engines, tractor ploughs, etc., had almost totally replaced the gangs of labourers with picks and shovels in their hands. In the penitentiary, however, where hand labour was to be had for nothing, gangs of convicts still functioned as road builders, hoe gangs, axe gangs and so forth . . . There the rhythmic worksong still had, and to a limited extent still has, a function . . . Whatever the future of other types of folk song, the worksong type will probably shortly disappear from the world." ("Archive of American Folk Song").

Reviews

Tolstoy—Eccentric or Realist?

TOLSTOY by Janko Lavrin 7/6

In these days it is frequently stated that we are in the throes of a "cultural and spiritual crisis." That there have been such crises throughout history is not gainsaid, but the one which is upon us now is generally acknowledged to be, if for one reason alone, literally a matter of life and death. That reason is the terrifying development in the realm of destructive power which has occurred during the present century; and even to-day's weapons may be considered moderate in a few years' time. No person with any insight or imagination can fail to be aware of the two fundamental alternatives with which we are confronted—(1) the continuance of the self-annihilation of the human race: (2) the abolition of the use of violence as such—irrespective of 'rights and wrongs'. Whether people care to acknowledge this state of affairs is another matter.

To those who are prepared to accept the foregoing—without any 'ifs or buts'—the views on this subject recently expressed by a writer of some standing will be of interest. I refer to Professor Janko Lavrin's second book on Leo Tolstoy, which he describes as "an approach"; justifiably perhaps, in the same way in which one might approach St. Paul's from Trafalgar Square via the murky underground, instead of enjoying the sunlight on the top of a 'bus, with the summit of the Cathedral in sight. Mr. Lavrin chooses the underground, approaching psycho-analytically, endeavouring to demonstrate that Tolstoy's teachings were those of an eccentric, showing a complete lack of realism (as opposed to his "acute realism in art"). He discounts all of Tolstoy's sociological and philosophical beliefs, not according to their veracity or otherwise, but the circumstances in which they found their way into his mind. For example, because some childhood experience led Tolstoy himself to suggest that this probably caused his subsequent hatred of all violence and authority, the implication is that this is tantamount to a denial of the validity of Tolstoy's pacifism! Full advantage is taken of the fact that Tolstoy, through his extensive autobiographical writings, makes himself an easy prey to this kind of criticism.

In dealing with "the very root of Tolstoy's anarchism", *i.e.* his opposition to all forms of government (which he considered to be organised violence) Mr. Lavrin, after quoting him from "The Kingdom of God is within You", goes on to say—"It all sounds smooth and plausible at first. But when one looks into the matter thoroughly, one is astonished at the number of other aspects which Tolstoy ignored, and had to ignore, in order to arrive at his own half-truths and simplifications." Believe it or not, Mr. Lavrin, after this amazing accusation, fails to give a single example of these "half-truths and simplifications." Surely it was Tolstoy's *refusal* to accept the half-truths and lies upon which the majority of people's lives were founded which impelled him to seek a religion or philosophy based upon truth. Hypocrisy was his main enemy. In the policies of sociologists, politicians and even the majority of revolutionists of his day Tolstoy saw nothing but illusion, in so far as they all neglected that which he considered to be the fundamental evil—violence. After searching earnestly for a solution to both his own and society's problems in the teachings of the Orthodox Church, this inconsistency again confronted him, for the Church not only gave its blessing to national wars, but also to the internal use of violence by the State against the individual.

This brought Tolstoy to the position in which he himself had to hammer out a practical course of action from his own understanding and reasoning; his conclusion being that if the prevalent evils of war, want and disease, with their accompanying widespread misery and degradation, were directly traceable to the fact that man uses violence against man, then the *first step* in overcoming these evils should be the refusal to use violence. Since violence used in an apparently justifiable instance (most instances are "justified" in one way or another) is just as harmful and useless as that which is classed as "criminal", then *violence itself* must be renounced. This is the real meaning of Tolstoy's apparent advocacy of a relapse into a "primitive" condition of society, his condemnation of "civilisation" and the losing of one's individuality in an all-embracing "group-consciousness". His attitude only appears to be negative and retrogressive if one fails to acknowledge that the civilisation of his day was but a veneer, which attempted to obscure the actual false values upon which it was based. This is even more applicable to-day when new low levels of depravity and hypocrisy have been reached. When the vast majority of people can listen to or passively tolerate the 'moral' vapourings of our "Christian" leaders, whilst these same leaders organise the extermination of vast numbers of their fellow-beings, often in tormenting agony, this in itself must bring into question the very word *civilisation*. After condemning this falsity, Tolstoy endeavoured to put into practice a policy of non-co-operation with the State, and encouraged others to do likewise to the limit of their strength.

In this book, I regret to say that one continually comes across such wild statements as—"His (Tolstoy's) aim to reduce all human beings to the same denominator . . . " Tolstoy's definition of "his static Milennium" and the imputation that he avoided "the complicated tasks imposed upon us by civilisation" thereby "betraying humanity itself"; and so on. In my view, these remarks reveal the failure of the writer to understand the fundamental attitude of Tolstoy towards life and its problems. There was nothing "static" about his beliefs, and, unless one is purposely taking a

very superficial view, they cannot be dismissed by simply labelling them "unrealistic", "puritanical" or "eccentric." The question is, with all the historical, philosophical, biological and other knowledge at our disposal, and, as far as is humanly possible, taking an unprejudiced view, do Tolstoy's teachings offer a possible solution to current world problems? Are they a practical guide for the individual? Mr. Lavrin's opinion on these points is contained in the following passage: "non-resistance to evil would have only one result in practice: the unscrupulous portion of humanity would take advantage of it and exploit their 'Christian brothers' by the most incredible methods of violence and oppression the world has ever seen." Here we are at the core of the writer's objection to Leo Tolstoy—the most commonly accepted objection of all—that the abandonment of violence by the individual would simply lead to the law of the jungle. (I will continue to use the word 'violence,' although J.L. makes a nice distinction between 'violence' and 'force'). In other words we must be prepared to use violence in order to prevent worse violence and inhumanity. But surely we are seeing the result of that policy to-day, with almost every government in the world conscripting or urging its people to employ every known means of destruction—in the name of "peace and freedom"! The illusion that the "peace-lovers" can preserve "civilisation" and "Christianity" by force of arms (including, of course, 'block-busters' and 'rocket-bombs', and later on who-knows-what) cannot be maintained very much longer, in spite of the lack of imagination on the one hand and of moral courage to use it on the other. When Mr. Lavrin can explain to me the moral distinction between an English 12,000lb. bomb and a German V.2. then I may change my view. At present he is siding with the forces of destruction and retrogression, even if unconsciously, by his refusal to face up to Tolstoy's challenge, and, in consequence, is making more difficult the work of the followers of Tolstoy and Gandhi, in whom alone I see any real hope of mankind raising itself out of the existing morass.

LAURIE HISLAM.

Education for Living

THE EDUCATION OF FREE MEN. HERBERT READ *Freedom Press* 1/-

In the introduction to the Government's White Paper on *Educational Reconstruction* occur these sentences concerning the organisational changes of the Education Bill (1943).

> "The new educational opportunities must not, therefore, be of a single pattern. It is just as important to achieve diversity as it is to ensure equality of educational opportunity. But such diversity must not impair the social unity within the educational system which will open the way to a more closely knit society and give us strength to face the tasks ahead."

It seems good, at first reading, to discover that there is to be a 'diversity', but the warning that this will not be allowed to 'impair' the chances of a 'more closely knit society' coming into being, gives one reason to think. And the outcome of meditation might well be uneasiness, in view of what 'social unity' has so far enabled governments to do in the direction of curtailing the individual liberties of their subjects without noticeable resistance.

Apparently, the reforms are designed to 'secure for the children a happier childhood and a better start in life.' There is no question that to-day schoolchildren regard school much more favourably than ever before; that gone are the bad old days of the 'phlebotomists' and the 'good old grinders'. We hear a good deal about 'free' discipline and the all-importance of the teacher's own personality as the source of accepted law and order, rather than the punitive factor. But we are far, generally, from achieving the ideal that Tolstoy set up in his experimental anarchic school at Yasnaya Polyana.

Much ink, too, has been spilled by educators since Comenius in setting forth naturalistic theories of educational aims and methods. The *Didactica Magna* appeals

constantly, if at times a little crudely to the harmonious functioning of Nature as a model to the teacher. Rousseau's *Emile* was a work of protest against the warping effects of the 'civilised' education of his day; while Lavisse argued for an integrated system of instruction in which each individual pupil was acted upon by the whole teaching body of his school, so making the latter an organic unit of educative influence.

Of recent times, we have had theorists of the calibre of Dewey, with a sociological bias in his attitude towards education; Froebel telling us that the child naturally and inevitably senses what is best for his own development; and Dr. Montessori, putting the child in the forefront, with the teacher at hand as a helper when called upon by the child for assistance in his inquiries and guidance in his practice. This accords with Herbert Read's idea of the teacher as 'an infinitely patient collaborator', and the paidocentricism implied should find sympathy with him. But, in view of the increasingly vocational trend of school training, his pamphlet is most timely.

To quote again from the White Paper, ". . . a much closer collaboration between industry and commerce and the education service is essential if the country is to develop a national system and to secure a personnel with a training and knowledge adequate to the needs of the future . . . What is wanted . . . is that industry and commerce should review their arrangements for training, and should co-operate in associating the technical colleges and art schools more fully with the industrial and commercial life of the country." We do not seem to have progressed very far from Aristotle's principle that politics is architectonic to education, except that the industrialist steps in to tell the politician what is wanted from the school, and the politician commands the teacher to deliver it.

We have the misfortune to be living in a technocratic era dominated by authoritarian philistines, whose power-mania drives them to a degree of destructive perversity in the use of machines that indicates an advanced stage of socal morbidity. Men are suffering the world over for their gullible acceptance of the demands of these potentates who are vitiating before our eyes the benefits accruing from our modern productive competence. There is some realisation of our mass servitude to the ruthless machinations of rogues and the blunderings of highly placed fools, and the recognition of the evils inherent in our present social order is becoming more general, probably because of the slight improvement and extension of popular education. But the importance to rulers of preventing the coming to self-consciousness of their peoples has not diminished since the days of Napoleon, Fichte and Bismarck. Was is not the last who remarked that it was the schoolmaster who conquered at Sadowa and Gravelotte? Mussolini and Hitler were not slow to see the use that could be made of the schools. Dr. Read, therefore, opportunely repeats the warning of William Godwin, that the alliance between national education and national government is " . . . of a more formidable nature than the old and much contested alliance of church and state."

For two reasons, then, politicians require to control the education dispensed by the State—to ensure a ready supply of efficient artisans and technicians for industrial competition and the war-making that goes with it, and to preserve a mass receptivity to propagandist suggestion.

Dr. Read concerns himself not only with criticising the general political purpose of national education, but also with the psychological problems involved in learning and teaching, since a way has to be discovered of dealing with this fatal readiness of men to be regimented to acceptance of the will of their rulers. A great deal of psychological research has already been undertaken by educators, and attempts have been made to raise the educational process to a scientific level. Professor Tichener went so far as to claim that the psychology textbooks would one day be as crammed with formulæ as the physics textbooks of to-day. We have come to hear of such things as the Correlation formulæ, the purpose of which is to determine the relative value of two subjects of study; and of the once promising I.Q., which, however, has the blemish of needing to rely, for the fixing of the data upon which the fraction is built, upon a purely subjective process. But the effort to treat a geographically circumscribed group as a collective personality, as would be necessary for such 'scientific work' to be possible, is fraught with unreason, as Max Nordau pointed out.

Dr. Read favours the *Gestaltpsychologie,* traceable back to Wundt's doctrine of mental creative synthesis. This was later developed by Ehrenfels, who noted that

a large number of sensory qualities belong to perceived wholes as such, and cannot be derived from isolated sensations which enter into them. Later still, the theory was extended to cover conscious processes other than perception. This element of 'feeling' about a particular pattern of events apprehended as a whole, and the value of imagery in all creative thought—scientific as well as artistic—are facts of first-rate value in any consideration of the learning process, of any method of training to develop the sensibility and real knowledge of one's self and the things outside the self. 'Grace and skill,' quotes Dr. Read from one of the Gestalt psychologists. 'go hand in hand,' and grace we particularly need in this age of industrial and social sordidity.

We must do everything to achieve the recognition of art as the finest form of education, inasmuch as it is a discipline of the senses and the imagination which will bring about the full and natural blossoming of the individual as an individual, and develop within him an ability to work with others to reach a higher level of human happiness. The tendency of 'authorities' has always been to persecute the independent and suppress the unique, since these types are awkward to handle; but they are precisely the types which make possible any advance in civilisation.

Dr. Read has much of interest to teachers. He appeals to them to cease as accomplices in the misguided business of modern education, which has hitherto paid far greater attention to the intellect than to the more important sensibility of our children, so creating schizophrenics and hastening the moral break-up of the community. The educator's function, as he sees it, is that of one

> ". . . who will not attempt to impose on his pupil arbitrary conceptions of 'good' and 'bad', which the child is unable to feel or understand (and which therefore lead to a state of tension or disunity which is one origin of neurosis). He will ignore the whole system of 'make-believe' with its rewards and punishments, its constraints and inhibitions. He will try instead to establish a reciprocity and trust between himself and his pupil, and one of co-operation and mutual aid between all the individuals within his care."

Wisdom such as this has been all too rare in the classroom, and this closely-reasoned pamphlet shows just what is being fatally left out in the nationalised scheme of education hailed as 'revolutionary' by its makers, but really as conservative as ever in its prime purposes—the maintenance of the privilege system in the interests of the few and the extension of their enslaving control over the many.

R.G.

Perspective for Poetry

PERSPECTIVE FOR POETRY JACK LINDSAY. (*Fore Publications* 2/-)

Mr. Lindsay's theme is that social conflict, and conflict between society and the individual, should be resolved by the poet in his work; that the poet's function is to guide the group and the individual through crisis to a greater stability. Post-war and contemporary poetry fails to do this because of its conception of the poet as "passively contemplating, accepting disintegration." To redeem this failure poets should join actively in the class-struggle. Though Mr. Lindsay writes in a well-known cliquey intellectual shorthand, the Communist Party is not directly mentioned.

In twenty-five pages Mr. Lindsay analyses the work of the Georgians, the war-poets, the 'twenties, the 'thirties, the surrealists and the apocalyptics; discovers the bases and criteria of good (and true) poetry; answers the questions of form and context, artist and audience, freedom and conformity, myth, spontaneity, pacifism and science. He does not use the word Propaganda. Blake is supplied with a pedestal, and under its carpet are swept all those dusty facts which obstruct Mr. Lindsay's springclean. The fact, for instance, that if Auden had any fundamental poetic theory in the early Thirties, it was that of Mr. I. A. Richards. But it isn't

till after the summing up of Auden (he gets one sentence: "Auden worked out the idea of the isolated individual lost in a breaking world"!) that the reader is presented with the "flaw of passivity" theory and realises that all the preceding half-truths have been uttered to make a case.

It would take too long to correct all the misrepresentations in this pamphlet, affecting Mr. Fraser, Mr. Hendry, Mr. Comfort, and a number of better-known writers. I will restrict myself to one or two points. Mr. Lindsay gives a page to Herbert Read's book "Poetry and Anarchism." "In its doctrinaire pride it does not even develop a mystical Gandhism to tell us how to deal with the actuality of a world corrupted into fascist trends, dominated by monopoly." This is quite a clever way of avoiding mention of Read's exposition of syndicalism towards the end of his book, but the cleverness is abandoned later. "We noted the pacifist element in Read's surrealist-anarchism. It is in some degree an inevitable part of the passivity-flaw . . . If you are outside the struggle . . . you cannot have any real sense of the transforming factor, the dynamic. Either you retire into a fantasy world or you get depressed You turn pacifist." But Read's whole argument is that pacifism is not enough, that pacifists should be revolutionaries!

"Socialist society" says Mr. Lindsay, "cannot fail to encourage the vital conformity which is the deepest creative stimulus, the deepest freedom." The word "encourage", one feels, is rather mild. The rest of this astonishing statement requires a definition of "conformity" before it can be understood. The nearest we get to one is: "We conform to the demands of life, of reality." "Real", for Mr. Lindsay, is equivalent to "objective," and a lot of the nonsense in this pamphlet derives from a mechanist outlook disguised as dialectic. Mr. Lindsay accuses the apocalyptics of offering a "totally mechanist opposition of self and society," whereas in fact, by refusing to accept his naive view of reality they do precisely the opposite—they want "the living synthesis of man and his world" (Hendry). But then, perhaps Mr. Lindsay didn't find time to read "The New Apocalypse."

As for the main theme of this pamphlet, which is only sustained by Mr. Lindsay's careful pruning of the facts, it is obvious that far from accepting disintegration, poetry in our time has consciously attempted to align itself with the class-struggle, and therein have been its difficulties. Despite Mr. Lindsay's quaint view that a world-view implies an ideological attitude, the fact is that the class-struggle is secondary to that existing between the individual and State-society, and that the individual, as a poet, has to resolve this primary conflict with myth as his method; that as a social unit he must strive to resolve the conflict along human, anarchist lines, based not on Lindsay's lie "anarchism is politically based on an atomic individualism", but on its exact opposite.

This pamphlet is recommended to those who like party games in which a pin is used. It doesn't much matter whether you decide to hunt for truth or falsehood. And you get a lovely cover-design for your money.

LOUIS ADEANE.